

BIBLE LESSONS ON EXODUS



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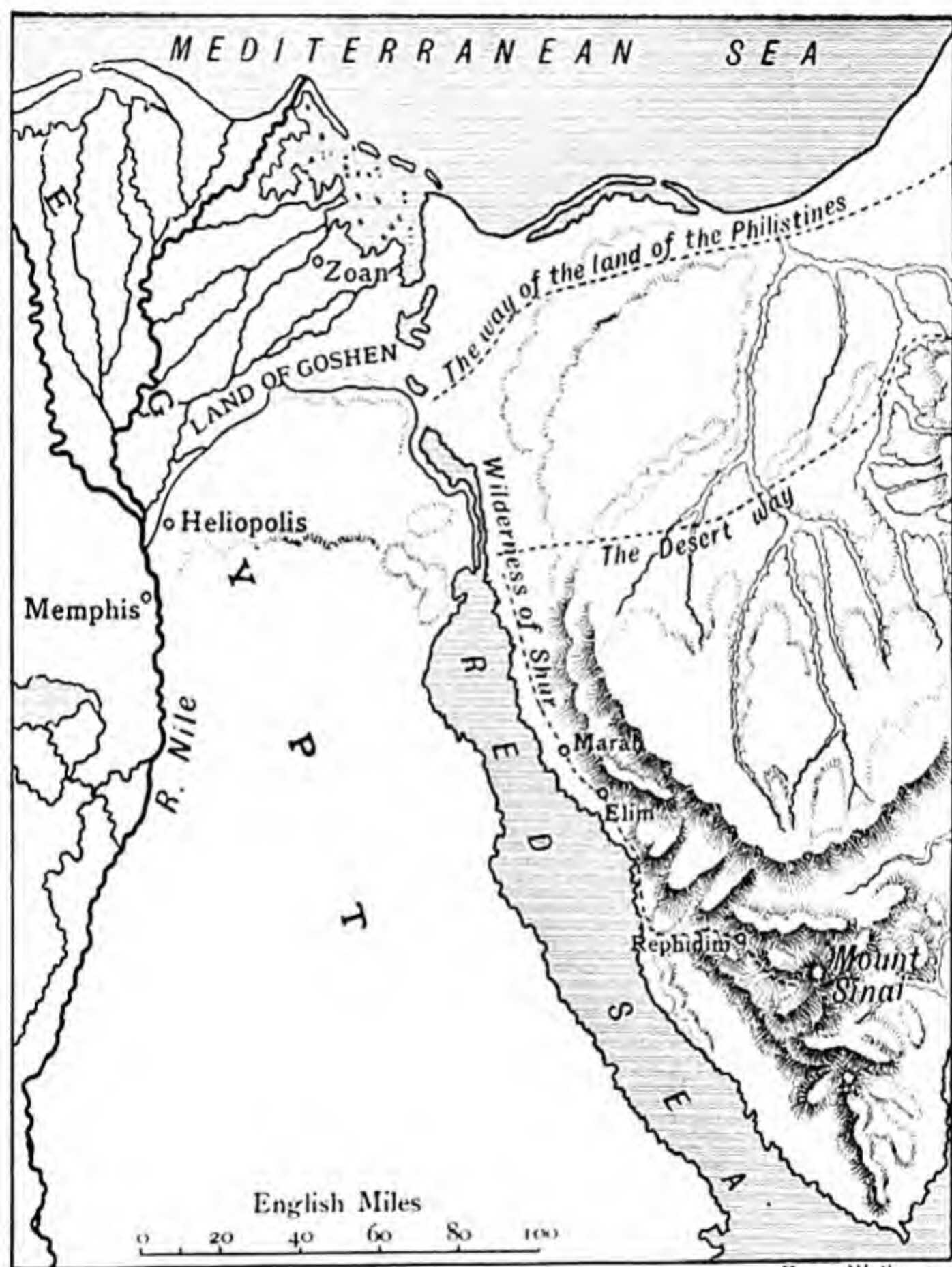
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JOURNEYINGS OF THE ISRAELITES.

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Bible Lessons for Schools

EXODUS

BY

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PREFACE

THE Book of Exodus was until some thirty years ago very generally studied in Schools and Bible Classes, but of late years this has not been so frequently the case. The following reasons may account for the change.

In the first place the Pentateuch has been the part of the Bible most discussed by the critics; therefore those who were seeking to lead the young to a constructive rather than a destructive attitude in their study of Scripture preferred for the time to choose other books for exposition.

A second reason is that there has been a tendency to read into the Book of Exodus preconceived views of Theology, and to adapt the types and figures of the latter part of the Book to these views instead of approaching it in an historical spirit, reading it in its broad lines, endeavouring to understand its lessons as they were given to the Jews, and thus connecting this early religious teaching with the later teaching of Christ and of the Apostles. This inclination to find a type in everything and to extract a forced meaning engendered a feeling that the Book of Exodus appealed to the imagination rather than to the reason, and men who were in earnest turned to other portions of the Bible which seemed clearer and

which they could read without the need of far-fetched interpretation.

A third reason which has made teachers in schools hesitate to choose this book of the Bible has been the apparently complicated arrangement and repetition of the latter half, which is really owing to the events and legislation being written down at the time and not as a late historical *résumé*. It seemed simpler to turn to the stories of Samuel and David or to the Kings of Israel and Judah.

There is still another difficulty which has to be faced, and that is the uncertainty as to the dates in Egyptian history, and especially the question as to whether the XVIIIth or XIXth dynasty was reigning during the period of the Exodus. If the dates in I. Kings vi. 1 and in Judges are to be taken (and towards these many scholars are now inclining), then all Egyptian history is thrown at least 100 years earlier, and the XVIIIth dynasty rather than the XIXth was in power. Until, however, further and more certain light is thrown upon the matter, it has seemed better to follow the generally accepted view and to connect the story of the Exodus with the XIXth dynasty.

In spite of these difficulties, we see more and more that no book of the Old Testament stands out in bolder and grander outline than the Book of Exodus, no book is more helpful to the teacher in conveying to the mind of the scholar the first conceptions as to the spirituality, power, majesty, and love of God. In this book we read how the Great Teacher of the human race approaches man, and by miracles of judgment and mercy, as well as by laws and ordinances relating to practical life and worship, puts before man a clear revelation of his sinful

nature, and reveals to him the way of pardon, of approach, and of relationship and communion with Him.

He gave these lessons to a child nation, to men whose minds had been confused and darkened by centuries of slavery and of sin. The teaching was, therefore, in the simplest and most rudimentary forms. As such it appealed to the Israelite in his early development and still appeals to children of every age and race. But these lessons have not appealed to children only; on the contrary, they are the birthright of the advanced Christian also, for they are instinct with actual life and with eternal truth, and are as capable of expansion and of illumination as the ten words or commandments given upon Mount Sinai. Each miracle, each commandment, each ordinance was God-given; they emanated from Truth and are truth, and now, when seen in the light and teaching of the New Testament, they become radiant with significance and beauty.

It is with the thought of helping both student and teacher to study the Book of Exodus upon these broad lines that the following lessons have been written. Many types and shadows beyond what are here suggested present themselves to the mind of the reader, but it has been thought better not to emphasize them, and to bring forward only what seemed to be the main bearing of the Book, those lessons which lie most evidently upon its face, and which, being connected with and illuminated by New Testament teaching, have the undoubted stamp of truth upon them.

In studying the Exodus the following books will be found useful for the practical Teacher. Edersheim's *Wanderings of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness*, Hastings' *Bible*

Dictionary, The Expositor's Bible, The Speaker's Commentary, Alexander Maclaren's Expositions, Smith's Permanent Message of the Exodus, and Professor Flinders Petrie's History of Egypt, but beyond these it will be necessary to watch the current literature for the fresh light which is constantly being thrown upon the subject by explorations and discoveries. For this purpose Col. Conder's books and those of Professor Sayce are especially fruitful, as also The Expository Times, and the Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

The Lessons are longer than those usually given to an average Class, but being divided into paragraphs they can be taken in parts or given as a whole. The purpose of the book being distinctly practical, Exodus is taken as it stands as a trustworthy record, and all questions as to authorship and text are as deliberately omitted as in the author's former notes of Lessons.

In conclusion, the author desires to express her grateful thanks to Canon Girdlestone for his assistance in the revision of these Lessons.

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HAVERGAL COLLEGE,

September 2nd, 1907.

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LESSON I.

INTRODUCTORY LESSON TO THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

The Main Outlines of Genesis and Exodus.

The names of the first two Books of the Bible, Genesis the origin, and Exodus the departure, strike the keynote of their contents. Genesis tells of the origin of good and evil, the beginning of the struggle between the powers of darkness and the powers of light, the necessity of separation from sin and of a new life unto righteousness. We see this struggle worked out in individual lives—as in the case of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. One by one these men stand out like stars in a dark night, one by one they shed the light of obedience, faith, hope, and love: they reach forward towards holiness and God.

In Exodus a like movement from darkness to light goes on, but it is wider and more far reaching; it is the movement of a nation rather than of individuals. In Genesis, Abraham was called to come out and be separate, and he went out not knowing whither he went, God speaking to him and strengthening him to go forward. In Exodus a whole nation is called out by God and responds to the call, and by the power of God working for them is enabled to break away from Egypt and be free. But the Book of Exodus goes further than the setting free of a nation from earthly bondage. It tells of the deliverance from the slavery of sin, the giving of the greatest of Magna Chartas to the world—the delivery of the ten primal laws of God, lifting men into the light of His countenance, giving them freedom to

serve Him in love and purity, showing them how to preserve a right relationship towards one another. But Exodus goes even further than this. It shows how a nation passed from contact with the idolatry of Egypt and ignorance of God into relationship with Him. They are brought, as it were, out of the valley of darkness into the light of a mountain top whence they can see outlined before them the way of salvation, the coming of their great High Priest, the Mediator between God and man.

The Ideal of the Book of Exodus.

A wonderful ideal had been given in Genesis of the relationship that was possible between the individual soul and God—Enoch walked with God ; Abraham was the friend of God ; Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed. In Exodus an ideal is given of the relation which, if the nation could have received it, was possible between them and God.

According to this ideal God is to be the King and Leader of His people. To Him they are to look for guidance at every step of their journey, by His laws they are to be governed. They are to listen to His voice and obey His will. They are to be conscious of His presence and to draw near to Him in worship. They are to go forward believing that the help which has been behind them in the past will continue to be their succour in the future. God is to be to them "a very present help in trouble." In all this the Israelites prefigure the Spiritual Church of God, for if God is not as definitely recognised as the King and Leader of a nation now, as He was of the Israelites of old, yet He is the Leader of the Church of God ; that is to say, of the believing men of all nations. They look up to Him like Israel of old, they take all from His hand, their hope is the furtherance of His Kingdom, and their expectation is His visible return to reign amongst them.

The Character of the National Struggle through which the Israelites Passed.

The Israelites had been enslaved by the Egyptians. It is difficult for us at this distance of time to realize how much

this meant. Egypt was then the capital of the world, and the kingdom of Egypt the representative of the world power intellectually as well as politically; whereas the Israelites were a nation of slaves, downtrodden by centuries of bondage. What power had they? Humanly speaking, very little. Called out to found a spiritual kingdom, they resembled the Apostles who were called to found the Church in the face of the Roman Empire at the time of its highest cultivation and political strength, at the time when its Emperors were worshipped as gods. Yet in the face of all this the Apostles were bidden "to preach the Gospel to every creature," and they were enabled to do so because they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost and with power," "and the word of God had free course and was glorified." The civilization and military despotism of Rome, the intellectual civilization of Greece, and the enterprising colonization of the Jews, instead of being forces arrayed against Christianity, became pathways for the messengers of light. In like manner Egypt was the training school of Israel. Its learning and civilization prepared Moses and the leading Israelites, so that when the time came for the revelation of God they could receive it. The army of Pharaoh with his boasted chariots was overthrown in the Red Sea. God said let there be spiritual light, and the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai; the vision of the Tabernacle, God's dwelling among men, was granted to Moses. Israel was separated from the idolatry of Egypt and called to resist the wickedness of Canaan, the stronghold of sin, just as Egypt was the stronghold of oppression. ✕

The Sources of Information as to the Condition of Israel and of Egypt at this Time.

The three chief sources of information are

First—The Book of Exodus.

Second—The inscriptions on monuments.

Third—The mention by secular historians.

Of late many new discoveries have been made of records upon monuments and temples, and the ancient papyri of Egypt have furnished inscriptions of various kinds. There are also extracts from the writings of Manetho, an Egyptian priest, who lived B.C. 250, which are very valuable. Unfortunately the manuscript of his writings has been destroyed, and it is only at third or fourth hand that we get our information, but both he and the monuments agree in telling that Rameses moved his capital to Zoan close to the centre of Israel. They tell also of a Pharaoh whose brave and glorious reign terminated very suddenly. This king had no son, and there were serious revolts in the latter part of his reign. They tell also that the mines which had been worked by forced labour were stopped, and probably, as recent excavations in Pithom and Tanis indicate, because the Jewish labour was no longer there to work them. These and like references fill out and confirm the stories of the Bible. It has been said that at each new discovery the witness of the Book of Exodus intermingles and harmonizes with the inscriptions of the monuments and the historical records like the pieces of a dissecting map which are being brought together and are gradually forming a united whole. The discovery of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, for instance, show that the Canaanite language of the time was Semitic, and they are written in the cuneiform character which Egyptian experts, including Moses, must have understood. They tell also about the petty kingdoms into which Canaan was subdivided. The points which seem most difficult and doubtful are year by year cleared up, and historical as well as Biblical certainty is gradually gained.

The Condition of Egypt at this Time.

Egypt in the time of Joseph has been thought by many to have been under a race of kings called the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings. If so these were of Phoenician descent and of Semitic origin, and in some respects akin to Jacob and his sons. They seem to have had some rudimentary knowledge of God and of truth, and would not be as far removed in thought from the Israelites as were their suc-

cessors. Hence the welcome which the Shepherd Kings gave to Jacob and his sons, and the protection of their posterity in the land of Goshen was not so wonderful a matter as at first sight it appears to be. But, as time went on, these kings became gradually weaker and weaker, and the monarchs of Southern Egypt steadily increased in power. Finally, according to the view of some students, what is called the XIXth Dynasty took possession of Egypt, and with this dynasty evil days fell upon the Israelites.

Under the XVIIIth and XIXth Dynasties Egypt rose to the height of its power and glory. They ruled over a country fertile almost beyond belief. The waters of the Nile, as they receded, covered the land with a thick red soil, so that its banks resembled a well-watered garden. The river also teemed with fish, and the water was so healthful that it has even been said to be nutritious. Egypt abounded with orchards and gardens. There was animal life of all kinds, abundant harvests, and everything that goes towards the building up of a mighty kingdom. In other respects also the greatness and magnificence of the kingdom was such that it is almost impossible for us to realize it. It was great in intellect, and its greatness survived until later years, as we see from the accounts of Herodotus and Plato. It was great in architecture, for we find remains such as that of the temple of Thebes and of the Pyramids, which were built with a skill and a magnificence unsurpassed at any subsequent period of the world's history.

When we contrast with this the condition of Israel, we find a nation sunk in a condition of slavery for three and a half centuries. It is true that in some respects the people had gained from their sojourn in Egypt. From after references in the Bible we find that they had learned agriculture, they had acquired various arts, such as weaving and pottery, and had been changed gradually from a nation of shepherds into a nation of agriculturalists and mechanics. There are evidences also that a few of the better class had acquired some of the learning of Egypt. Still, what chance had a nation like Israel when confronted with the untold wealth and power of Egypt?

Comparison of the Religion of the Hebrews with that of the Egyptians.

Among the Israelites there seems to have been a knowledge of God and of the true religion. They had a rite of circumcision, they offered sacrifices, and there seems to have been some observance of the Sabbath day. Compare the storing of the manna and "*Remember* that thou keep holy the Sabbath day."

A trace of religious hope is found also in the names which the Israelites gave their children, such as

Elizur—My God, a rock.

Elizaphan—My God that watcheth all around.

Zuriel—My rock is God.

About the religion of the Egyptians it is difficult to say much, for the chief records that are left are upon their tombs, and those records, naturally, are connected with death. From them, however, we gather that there was some knowledge of God, and a conception of some of His attributes, and that they believed in immortality and a reward for good and a punishment for evil in the future life. As far as can be traced they seem to have had little thought of the presence of God among them. To them He seems to have been a God of judgment into whose presence they must one day come rather than a munificent deity who entered into their daily life and overruled the course of events. See Sayce's *Monument Facts*, p. 37.

The Jews as a whole probably had clearer light than this. They were conscious that God was working for them and around them. The coffin of Joseph stood a silent witness that in God's own time His power would be shown, and they would be taken out of Egypt. They probably knew further that the overruling hand of God, His rewards and punishments, were not for the future life only, but for the present life also; and though their knowledge was dim, yet God was a reality among them and around them, whereas to the Egyptians He was an unknown Being afar off, to whom their spirits must one day go.

The Darkness of the Outlook to Israel.

It had been foretold to Abraham that after four hundred years his descendants would come out of Egypt, but the fulfilment of this prophecy could never have seemed more impossible than at the time of the birth of Moses. The Israelites never seemed to be more surely forgotten of God, never less aware of His purpose, which, however, was slowly and surely being accomplished among them. Every new and harsh edict, whilst it increased their misery, at the same time slowly furthered the will of God. The sojourn in the land of Egypt was necessary, for if the Israelites were to conquer Canaan, they must first grow into a strong and mighty host of men, and time was needed for them to do so. In these four hundred years they are said to have passed from seventy souls to two million of people. They were oppressed and forced to labour for the Egyptians, but in labouring they learned many of the arts of civilization. These, again, were necessary if they were to conquer the Canaanites, who were powerful and civilized. Then came the two cruel edicts for the destruction of their children and for the exacting of forced labour, yet even these two edicts under the hand of God were necessary for their deliverance. They had become settled in the land of Egypt. They rejoiced in its wealth and luxury, even though they had little share in it. They would never have been willing to arise and leave it but for the sharp persecutions which they endured. The destruction of the children welded the women together in a common hatred and dread of the Egyptians. The forced labour and the cruel oppression welded the men together, so that they too cried out for deliverance and freedom.

This was the condition of the two nations as they stood facing one another. Egypt at the zenith of its glory, powerful and determined to crush and subdue the nations subject to her. Israel at the depth of her terror and affliction.

The Contrast between the Leaders of the Two Nations.

The contrast between the two nations comes out in the character and work of the leaders on either side,

Moses had risen to power in the court of Egypt. But who could tell whether he would throw himself on the side of Egypt or of Israel? And even when Moses had decided for Israel he was forced to flee for his life. How impossible it would have seemed to the Egyptians of that day if they had been told that the knowledge of these mighty monarchs would one day almost have died away; that their names would be of interest to the greater part of the world chiefly because they were connected with the Israelites and with Moses. How could they have believed that the man who for conscience' sake had left the court of Pharaoh and had been exiled from his country, who had joined a despised race of slaves, would be known in every part of the civilized world, and not only known, but would exercise an influence for good as long as the world itself should last.

According to the creed of many, the XIXth Dynasty was reigning and the kings were men of strong character. The features of Seti I. can still be seen in his mummy at Boulak. His face bears the mark of culture and refinement. He was evidently a man of good breeding, great intellect and character. Photographs have been taken of the mummy of Rameses also, and although his face is not so able as that of Seti, yet it shows strength, pride, and power. Both men built great temples to commemorate their names and were embalmed after death and their bodies buried with all the honour and care that could be given to them. Surely their memory would last forever? See the discovery of their tombs and other details about them in pages 149-159 in *The Land of the Pharaohs*.

Moses, on the other hand, left no memorial behind him beyond the spiritual temple which God had enabled him to build. His body was not embalmed after death, nor was it buried with any pomp or show. On the contrary, "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." But his work was spiritual and of God, and as such has endured and will endure forever, while the glory of Egypt and the fashion of it has passed away.

LESSON II.

EXODUS I. AND II.

THE EPIC OF THE DELIVERANCE.

“These things were written for our learning.”

The Book of Exodus has been well called “The Epic of the Deliverance of Israel.” In the first chapters we see the nation in hopeless slavery and degradation. At its close we find the same nation in freedom of body and of soul, worshipping God according to the vision which had been revealed to their leader in the mount. Zacharias, when Christ was brought into the temple, foresaw that a like spiritual deliverance of the whole world would one day be accomplished by Him. At Christ’s advent the world lay in the slavery of spiritual sin : it will one day worship God, according to the vision seen by John, in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. The deliverance effected by Moses was of the same nature as that expressed by Zacharias, who, when speaking of this second and greater deliverance : prophesied “That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” In the book of Exodus we see foreshadowed the story of the life of each Christian, the darkness and bondage of sin, the call of God, the response, and the God-given strength, by which the power of sin is broken. It is in this way that it is full of help and inspiration to the individual soul. Each one can see worked out for himself the outline of the dealings by which God draws near to him, appeals to and delivers him if he will respond to His call.

Moses: a Type of Christ.

Moses was chosen by God to effect the deliverance of His people, and the story of his life and life-work is the theme of the greater part of Exodus. He was one of the greatest, if not the greatest man who ever lived. In his character we see a God-given power of self-sacrifice, a measure of the spirit which dwelt in its fulness in Christ. His soul was bent to do the will of God; we find in him as well as self sacrifice a compassion on the multitude, a yearning after holiness, a power of intercessory prayer, a desire for the presence of God. In these respects he was a forerunner of Christ, and as foreshowing the beauty of Christ's character every touch that is recorded of his childhood and youth is of peculiar interest; but in order to understand his history and its bearings it is necessary first to relate briefly the great change which had passed over Israel during the three and a half centuries from the death of Joseph to the opening of the Book of Exodus.

The Changed Condition of Israel at the Death of Joseph.

Joseph died and all his brethren and all that generation, and as they passed away there died also all sense of gratitude on the part of Egypt to the deliverer who had saved the country and had also laid the foundations of good government upon which its subsequent power and wealth were built. Good men die and their memory passes away from the earth, but their work remains. The threads of that work may pass out of sight for a time, just as those of a loom go behind at times, and do not reappear until the Great Weaver sees that the time is come for them to enter once more into the plan of His work. A good man's work has the eternity of God in it just in proportion as that work is in accordance with the will of God and according as he has been permitted by God to take part in the forwarding of the kingdom of righteousness. "God buries His workmen and carries on His work."

The Hostile Attitude of the New Dynasty.

"A new king arose who knew not Joseph." This new dynasty was hostile to those which had preceded it, and especially to the Shepherd Kings, or to anyone who was of Phoenician origin. The new Pharaoh took up the government of Egypt. The spirit in which he took it up is shown in the words: "Let us deal wisely." That is to say, the king decided to do whatever would be most profitable to himself and to his kingdom, to seek self-aggrandizement rather than justice. But God watches over the fortunes of nations as well as those of individuals, and injustice in the long run recoils upon itself. Pharaoh dealt as he thought wisely, but he dealt with the short-sighted prudence of men, not with the long-sighted wisdom of God. He determined upon two things. He saw that the children of Israel had multiplied marvellously and in such proportion that if they were to rebel against Egypt the consequences would be dangerous, especially if they rebelled at a time when he was at war with another nation. The land of Goshen, where they lived, was the line of approach through which the Hittites usually made their attack upon Egypt. If the Israelites joined with them they would be very formidable, and therefore he determined to crush their spirit and their power by exacting the utmost rigor and forced labour from all the male population. Rameses II. is said to have been the most enterprising builder of all the Pharaohs. He advanced his works and at the same time cowed the Israelites and made their lives bitter to them. But this was not all; he determined also to destroy the male children, and by reducing their numbers to bring them into a state of complete slavery. He did not know that in doing this he was really fighting against himself and carrying out the determined purpose of Jehovah, and that his cruelty and oppression would, by its consequences, cripple the power of Egypt rather than that of Israel for many days to come.

The Consequences of his Injustice.

Pharaoh had some apparent success. The treasure cities were built, and the lives of the Israelites were made bitter

to them. To this day we can see the remains of their labour. Some children also were destroyed, but instead of subduing the Israelites, in no way could Pharaoh have better welded them together and prepared the way for their rebellion and departure. He preached a crusade more powerful than that of any Peter the Hermit, for he united both men and women in bitterness of spirit against him. The iron entered into their souls and bodies. They could not meet the demands of his injustice. The only course open to them was to make a desperate stand for liberty and life. The women mourned their little children; they could only protect their babes by fleeing from the country. The men, unable to satisfy their taskmasters, settled down into a sullen doggedness of despair. They waited for a deliverer, a deliverer, whom though they did not know it, God was even then preparing for them.

The Birth and Boyhood of Moses.

The story passes now from the history of the nation to that of the individual. The scene in all probability was close to Zoan. Zoan had been one of the palaces of the Hyksos kings, and from the discovery of one of the recent monuments, we find that Rameses had chosen it as the favourite place for his court. It was on a branch of the Nile, the only part which was not infested by crocodiles, and in which it was safe to bathe. Close to the river have been found the remains of mud huts, probably similar to those inhabited by the Hebrews. It was one of the highways of Egypt. All the wealth, pomp, military display and royal splendour of the country would pass up and down it, but of what value were they to the Hebrews in the midst of their suffering, injustice, and wrong?

The Birth of Moses.

Jochebed, "the glory of the Lord," was the mother of Moses. She had two other children, Miriam, then possibly a girl of about seven or ten years of age, and Aaron, who was three years of age at the time when Moses was born. Pharaoh, finding that the women whom he had commissioned

to kill the new-born children, had eluded his commands, took a further step in cruelty, and commanded each mother to kill her own child. This edict was probably not in force at the time of the birth of Aaron, but was enacted before the birth of Moses. The mother's whole thought at his birth was that she must save the child whom God had given her. She saw that he was beautiful, as we learn both from the words of Scripture and those of tradition, beyond the ordinary child. At the risk of her own life she concealed him as long as possible, and then thought out a way by which she might fulfil the command, and put the child into the river Nile, and yet, at the same time, even at the eleventh hour, deliver it. It seems as if she had committed the child to God, and had grasped the thought that God had heard her prayer, and could and would help her. But despite her hope we can almost see the agony with which she turned away from the river and went back to her house, where, although she could not hear its cries of distress, yet her whole heart and soul could in anguish await the fate of her child.

The Daughter of Pharaoh.

Side by side with this exquisite picture of motherhood stands the equally exquisite picture of womanhood as given in the daughter of Pharaoh. She had all that the wealth of Egypt could give, and according to Egyptian history, the princesses of the Egyptian house were independent and wealthy beyond the princesses of any other country; but her wealth had not closed her heart. The pity for a child which is implanted by God in every true woman had not been stifled by her wealth and luxury. The child's wail touched her, and when she drew him out of the water she could easily see that the quick-witted child who offered to fetch the nurse was the sister, and surely from the mother's face she must have known to whose care she committed the child. The fact of the child's origin and lowly birth made no difference to her. The child was a gift sent by the great Nile god. Thus religion and pity together combined to make her resist the law of Egypt and shelter the boy with her

protection. She seems to have given him a mother's love, and to have taken him as her adopted son. Later on she gave him all the advantages of education and of learning such as a royal prince of her own house might command.

Miriam, Moses' Sister.

In Miriam, the first Mary of the Bible, we see a picture of a young girl in her home, as beautiful in its way as the picture of the two women who had united to save Moses. She seems to have been a child full of sympathy and understanding, who entered into the home sorrow, and was quick and daring to do her part and to save her little brother. Neither she nor her mother knew how much that action meant to the history of Israel and to the history of the world. They probably thought of God as one who would help them in their trouble, and would soften the heart of Pharaoh's daughter to the little child. They could not know that the greatest issue of the world before the coming of Christ depended upon the rescue of that cradle, and upon the home training which was given to the little child contained in it. That Moses must have been carefully trained by his mother in the knowledge of God, and in such religion as still remained among the children of Israel, is evident from his life decision and from his after action. Who can estimate the power and influence of a good mother, and the responsibility that lies upon her in the training of her child? We find so little about women in the Old Testament that a touch like this one which is recorded is of especial interest to us.

True Womanhood.

It would be impossible to find three more beautiful types of womanhood than these, and as we pass from them this thought arises: It was natural that both mother and sister should risk their lives to save the child so dear to them; but why should Pharaoh's daughter, a woman of an alien and hostile race, defy the edict of Pharaoh and incur the danger and responsibility of saving the child? It must have been because she had the true womanhood which responds to the

cry of pity or distress, that cry which in a true heart translates itself into a call for help. The daughter of Pharaoh may one day rise in judgment against the women of these later days, for she responded to the call of Moses, whilst we are often deaf to the cries of distress which reach us. And the Christian woman is without excuse ; she ought to respond in far fuller measure than Pharaoh's daughter, for in every cry she ought to hear not only the call for help, but blending with it, and rising above it, the call of her Master, who bids her arise and minister, not only to the least of His brethren, but also unto Him.

LESSON III.

EXODUS, CHAPTER II.

THE TRAINING OF MOSES.

The Early Boyhood of Moses.

With what passionate joy must Jochebed have received back her little child and taken him out of the cradle daubed with pitch in which she had placed him. The daughter of Pharaoh may have thought that the babe was a gift to her from the Nile god, but Moses' mother would not only think but know that he was a gift and a trust from the great God Jehovah given back to her again. He probably remained in his home until he was seven or even twelve years of age, and as she trained him, knowing the brilliant future that was before him and the advantages of education and training which, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter he would receive at court, she would know that her one chance with the brilliant boy was during these early years to instil into his mind those principles which might keep him true to God and to his nation when he was far away from her. She must teach him the faith of his ancestors, the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so that they might become part of his nature, so strong that he could resist any after influence which might be brought to bear upon him.

The Youth and Education of Moses.

The day came when he passed from his mother's home into the court of Pharaoh's daughter, as some think

Nefertari, whose mummy was discovered a few years ago. Moses, as her son, was trained so that he became "mighty in words and deeds." By the expression "mighty in words" we understand that he was skilled in the learning of the Egyptians, and, if so, he would be well trained, for Egypt at this time stood first among the nations for culture and for wisdom. The Tel-el-Amarna tablets show the literary activity of the Mosaic age, and as Professor Sayce tells us show also that Babylonian literature was studied in the schools of Canaan. He may have studied, according to Manetho, at the School of Heliopolis, of which only one solitary column, the obelisk of User Tesen I., remains. We can almost stand in imagination beneath this obelisk and once again see the great city with its avenues of sphinxes, temples, palaces, and colleges as it has been described by great historians. We can go back in thought and see Joseph married to Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah. Four centuries later we can see Moses as he paced the same avenues, distinguished by his features and bearing as belonging to an alien race, but excelling all his compeers in power and learning. From the School he would probably return to the court of Egypt, and would there learn the statesmanship in which he afterwards excelled, as well as the religion of the country, for the Pharaohs were reckoned among the gods of Egypt, and Moses, when adopted as one of the royal race, would have to be instructed in the priestly lore of the country. Josephus tells us that he joined the army of Pharaoh, and that at the head of the army he defeated the Ethiopians and gained great power and popularity in Egypt.

The Great Choice.

If, as some think, Rameses II. was king at this time, Egypt was at the very height of its glory, and we can understand how dazzling a future must have offered itself to Moses. With his ability, his inborn God-given grace, and his education he might have attained to a power even greater than that of Joseph before him. Like Christ, all the kingdoms of the world and their power may have offered themselves

before his imagination, if he would fall down and worship the idolatry of Egypt; but, if he did so, what would become of his true heritage? What of the teaching of his mother as to Jehovah, and as to the nation which one day was to leave Egypt and to follow God in purity and truth? What decision would Moses take? If he sought popularity, ease, and power, then, raising himself to the highest pinnacle in the state, he might live and die as one of the Pharaohs. If he obeyed the call from God which was within him he would have to turn his back upon all the glory of Egypt, and to identify himself with a nation of slaves instead of with the Pharaohs, to lead a forlorn hope, which could hardly be described even as a hope, and go back and be the servant of a difficult and ungrateful race. We cannot help thinking that a middle course must have presented itself to him. Why could he not remain in the court of Pharaoh and acquiesce in the idolatry and in the sinful pleasure of the court, even although outwardly he had to agree to the persecution of the Israelites, whilst at the same time he secretly aided and protected them? Did it occur to him that it might be wise to yield so far in sinful compliance in order that he might the better shelter and protect his people? Possibly at the school, certainly in the court, long and deeply must he have brooded over and weighed the two courses, first on the one side and then on the other, until at last his final decision was made. He determined to cast his future into the hand of God, and to have the daring to stand out for liberty and for God. What the actual circumstance was which brought him to the final decision is not recorded. It has been supposed that he was required to take part in some oppression of the Israelites. It is of little moment whether it was so or not. The final decision may seem to have been suddenly made at the last, but it was no more sudden in reality than any of our final decisions are. What we do at any crisis of our lives is the gradual growth and outcome of our daily thought and acts. A great decision may be made in a moment, but there are years of conscious or unconscious habit and thought behind it.

The First Blow which Moses struck against Egypt.

We read that Moses saw one of his brethren suffering from injustice, and that he looked this way and that way, and slew the Egyptian, who was persecuting him. It is evident that he did not wantonly intend to provoke the Egyptian authorities before the time had come for rebellion, for it is said that "he looked this way and that." What he may have intended to do was to give the Israelites a sign that he was willing to be the deliverer of his nation, and that God by his means would save them and lead them forth. But he failed in his purpose, and only stirred up anger against himself. The Egyptian buried in the sand could not be embalmed, and thus, according to his religion, would lose all hope of immortality. The Israelites did not show any gratitude or keep silence. They may have thought the act a mistaken one, and were probably afraid to incur the anger of the Egyptians. Moses had to learn the lesson which comes to all of us, that we cannot help others against their will, and before they understand what we are doing. Men follow as leaders only those who have won their confidence and trust by their self-sacrifice and the services which they have rendered. Their one idea seems to have been that the whole nation would be brought into worse plight than before, as indeed was the case.

Pharaoh heard of the deed, and he "sought to slay him." Some have thought that Moses was at this time so powerful that he did not dare to attack him openly, but sought by underhand means to overthrow him and slay him. However this may be, Moses had no recourse but to relinquish the Israelites for whose sake he had given up his all, and to flee into the wilderness, where, at the beginning of the third chapter, he is described as sitting desolate and alone by a well watching the daughters of Reuel and the shepherds watering their flocks. Here again it was the sight of oppression that roused him. Men are the same whether they are in Egypt or in the wilderness, the strong oppress the weak, and Moses as he sat by the well side saw re-enacted, in another form, the scene which had just taken

place in Egypt. The shepherds drove the women away from the well, until Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flocks. Probably at first he was watching them, absorbed in his own thoughts, until he was roused by the injustice of the shepherds, and then he fought for their liberty, as he had fought for the liberty of the Israelitish race.

The Forty Years in the Wilderness.

Moses was received into the house of Reuel, or, as he is otherwise called, Jethro, one of the great men outside the Jewish race who seems to have had some knowledge of God, either revealed to him, or had been handed down to him from olden times. Moses dwelt with Reuel, became one of his herdsmen, and married his daughter, but as he led his flocks to and fro in the wilderness he felt himself a stranger in a strange land. Day by day the future must have seemed to grow darker and darker before him. To what purpose had he left his people, to what purpose had he devoted himself to his life work? He must have brooded upon the strange dealing of God with him, and upon the apparently impossible future, and, in consequence, although attached to Reuel and living in the desert with him, have been far away from him in heart. This is evidenced from the names which he gave his sons. "Gershom, a sojourner," tells how his heart was still with the Israelites and of his longing to return to help them. The name of the second, "Eliezer, God my helper," gives evidence of hope and strength. God had not cast him away, he knew that He would help him, He was still behind him and would one day effect His purpose, and yet, day by day, what a contrast his present life seemed to the life in Pharaoh's court, how mysterious the working of God! By his own deed and act he had apparently thrown away his power to help those for whom he had given his life. He had ruined his own life; had he ruined theirs also?

As he wandered alone around the foot of Sinai, a fugitive and an outcast, it must have been hard not to believe that it would have been better if he had remained in Pharaoh's court. There, as a leader among the priests, as a leader in

the army, he could have commanded a power and glory such as few have known, and in the course of time surely he could have helped and succoured his people, but, from his after life, we know that Moses did not rebel against the will of God. He seems to have had the strength to take God's training as it came. He had had the wonderful learning and preparation of the Egyptian court, he was now receiving an even more wonderful and needful training in the solitude alone with God. The forty years in the court of Egypt were followed by the forty years in the desert of Sinai. In the glory and splendour of the earthly court, surrounded by sin and evil, he could not have heard the still voice of God as he heard it in the wilderness. Moses had to endure hardness, to wander in the solitude of Sinai, in order that his ear might be opened and his heart prepared to receive the message of God. Just as Jacob had to leave his father's home and go out to Bethel before he saw the vision and heard God speaking to him; just as John had to leave the crowded marts of Ephesus, and to work in the marble quarries in the Isle of Patmos, before the vision of the revelation was given to him; just as our Divine Master Himself was called out into the wilderness, so Moses was called into the silence of the desert. All God's heroes, all who have done great work for Him and been leaders of His host, have first been called out, and, like Joshua in the tent of meeting, and like Paul in the long years at Tarsus, have heard His still small voice, and, hearing, have followed and prevailed.

LESSON IV.

EXODUS III. AND IV.

THE GREAT CALL.

Death of Pharaoh.

Forty years had passed since Moses had refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and had forsaken Egypt, and so far his great act of self-renunciation had apparently been of no service either to himself or to the people of God. He had been a powerful prince; he was now a shepherd far away in the wilderness, and all his influence was gone. He was ignorant even of the condition of the people to whom he belonged. He was an exile in a far-off land instead of being one of the nobles in Pharaoh's court and a man of weight and influence. Those who still remembered him must have thought that he had wasted his life, had thrown away all his influence, all his power for good. One thing alone he knew, and that was that he had taken the straight path. He had chosen to suffer affliction for the right rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. At last there came a change. Rameses II., according to the generally accepted chronology, the king of Egypt, died. He is known as the great master-builder, the man who erected temples, statues, and long chains of fortifications. In order to commemorate his glory he had caused inscriptions to be engraved upon temple walls and upon rocks. He did not know how all that he was then erecting to his own honour would one day be looked upon as so many monuments to

his cruelty. Every stone in his great towns and palaces was cemented with the blood of the slaves who laboured for him. He wrote up for himself a song of praise, little thinking that the notes of that song would turn into one of shame. We can see his face as it still lies in the museum at Ghizeh, but we turn from it with a shudder, because of the misuse which he made of power. Menephtah, his son, the new king, arose in his place, but his coming brought no change for the better to the children of Israel. The darkness of the oppression settled only the more heavily upon them. The light of God had not been visibly shown among them, nor His voice heard for over four hundred years. It seems strange that at a time when all hope had died away either in man or in God that a great national wail, the first prayer of Israel as a united people, should go up to God. It seems as if despite the darkness, one last ray of hope still lightened the general gloom. The cry of the nation was heard. God remembered His covenant, looked down upon their suffering and sorrow, and gave relief, as He has ever done in Old Testament as well as in New Testament times.

The Call of Moses.

As we reach this chapter we wish we knew something of what had been working in the heart of Moses during the long years of solitude in the wilderness. We know that he must have learned much from his silent communing ; for just as Israel by suffering had been brought to a point where they were ready for release, so by the long years in the wilderness Moses had been brought to the point at which he could hear the voice of God, and hearing could understand and obey. But nothing is said of all this. The story is so simply told that, as we read it, we seem to hear Moses himself speaking. He relates the facts without any of the appreciation and esteem with which he was always spoken of by after men and in after times. With the account in Exodus compare the way in which Stephen describes the same scene in later times. The story is so simply told. Moses in the course of his daily work leads his flock amidst

the beautiful pastures which lie at the foot of the mountain of Sinai. A vast silence, nowhere, we are told, so oppressive as in this region, surrounds him ; on the one side there lies around him the desert, on the other, towering above him in its awful grandeur, rises the mountain of God. But it was not the mountain which caught his attention. It was the strange sight of a bush burning with fire, and the angel of the Lord as a flame of fire in the midst of the bush. What was the meaning of it all, and what was the lesson which it had to teach ?

The Type of the Burning Bush.

The burning bush has suggested many types. It used generally to be thought that the bush represented the children of Israel ; the fire the furnace of affliction through which they were passing, but in which they were not consumed. The later writers have given other explanations also. Edersheim considers the bush, as it undoubtedly was, the children of Israel ; the fire the affliction ; the angel of God in the midst of the fire the presence of God — a God who chastens, but who does not consume. He holds that the burning bush symbolizes not only the relationship between God and Israel at all times, but also that between God and His church. But Maclaren gives another rendering, and connects the scene of the burning bush with the revelation of God as to His name which was about to be given. He connects the type of the burning bush with the name of the great "I AM." God is thus about to reveal Himself as an everlasting presence, purifying and glorifying His church, but not consuming it. Taken thus, the bush represented to Moses, and through Moses to the church at all times, the everlasting God surrounding and making immortal what would otherwise be a frail and perishing humanity. This agrees with the general way in which God reveals Himself as a fire throughout Old Testament and New Testament history. Compare the light which led the Israelites, the fire that descended, the tongues of fire, etc. "Our God is a consuming fire."

The burning bush has, therefore, two lessons: First, that throughout this changing world of ours there is the great central spiritual power of God, inexhaustible, unwearied. Secondly, it stands as a type of the immortality of the Church of God because of the purifying, glorifying presence of God within it and around it.

The Effect of the Vision upon Moses.

Moses turned aside to see this great sight, although he did not understand its significance, and as he turned a voice spoke, and the silence of the past four hundred years was broken. Once more the voice of God spoke to man, and not only spoke but called Moses by name. As he drew near the voice warned him to approach with fear because of the holiness of God, but at the same time it spoke in accents of love, and God revealed Himself to him as the God who had called out and blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is only as we learn to realize the holiness of God, and how to draw near to Him that we learn the other lesson of the great and unchanging love of God not only to us but also to the world.

We read that Moses was afraid to look upon God. Little wonder that an overpowering rush of feeling came upon him as he realized the divine presence, and the Spirit of God came upon him. A few moments ago he had wandered desolate, weighted down by the sorrows of a nation for whom he had apparently given his life in vain, and whom he was utterly powerless to help. Now God, the only one who can help, was drawing near, and God was speaking to his soul, and through it to the souls of all men throughout the ages whose ears have been opened to hear His word. All this might not be present to Moses, but two great emotions would certainly fill his heart. The answer to the cries and sorrows of the Israelites had come; and God had openly acknowledged him as His servant.

The Message of God to Moses.

Then comes God's message to Israel. He has heard their cry, He knows their sorrows, and He is about to deliver

them. He has chosen a land for them, in which they are to dwell and in which they will be marvellously sheltered. They will be surrounded by deserts on the southern side, the sea on the east, and mountain ranges on the north and west. Further, they are to be brought out and set free from the idolatry of surrounding nations as well as from the oppression of Egypt; also, God tells Moses that he is to be the chosen deliverer of His people. Two thoughts arise here. First, God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Had Israel in the depth of its despair murmured or plotted some rebellion it would have been all in vain, but because the cry of the nation went up to God it was heard and answered, and in His own good time their cause was avenged. And what was true of Israel has been at all times true, whether in the case of an individual or of a nation. We may think that a people or an individual are helpless and entirely under our power. We may know that the injustice which we practice towards them will not be known by others; but do what we will we cannot stop the cry of that injustice from going up to the ear of God, nor can we stay His arm which will turn to avenge their cause. The second lesson is that those who by the grace of God have been moved with compassion on account of the sorrow and sin of the world around them, and who are willing, like Moses or like Christ, to seek to alleviate that sorrow, are known of God. In His own time He will prepare them and call them out to do the work to which they have dedicated their lives and which for their Master's sake lies heavy upon them.

LESSON V.

EXODUS, CHAPTERS III. AND IV.

THE REPLY.

“I will be with thee.”

At first the reply of Moses seems to be disappointing. He has brooded for more than forty years over the wrongs of the children of Israel. He has longed for more than forty years to be their deliverer. Why should he hesitate now that the call has come to go forward? But Moses has changed and learned much of himself and of his task during these forty years in the wilderness. He who in his own strength had rushed forward at the sight of injustice, has learned to wait and to estimate the power against which he has to struggle, and to bring not only his own will but also his reason and judgment into subjection to the call of God. Therefore, whilst responding he hesitates and seeks for strength, because he knows and feels his own weakness. If he, as a prince of Egypt, with the power and the glory of his royal position behind him, could do nothing, what can he do, a shepherd and an outcast, who has lost all touch with the affairs of Egypt? Also he has learned to know himself and his own weakness. But his objections are taken away. The promise comes, “Certainly I will be with thee.” Moses alone, as a prince of Egypt, could do nothing, but Moses with the power of the King of kings behind him can meet and overthrow Pharaoh. Furthermore, God opens his eyes and gives him a pledge. As he now looks upon the mountain tops of Sinai in their solitary grandeur so one day he shall look upon them and see them surrounded by

the ransomed host of Israel, freed from the power of Pharaoh, freed from idolatry and sin, worshipping the God who had brought them out into His presence. Thus God together with the command gives a vision of the future, a pledge which, amidst all his coming difficulties, can sustain the soul of His servant. To us, as to Moses, God has given a pledge. We are here in the midst of the hosts of good and of evil, and are called upon to arise and play our part, for the way is dark before us; but amidst all our discouragements there is the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem. We know that the day will come when we shall be called to take part in the great gathering of the multitude who will serve day and night before the throne of God.

The Condition of Israel.

But it was not the power of Pharaoh which Moses was fearing at this moment so much as the condition of Israel itself. After forty years' sojourn in the wilderness alone with God, Moses could hear, respond to and obey the call of God, but how can the Israelites hear or obey? If they were not ready before, why should they be so now after another forty years of oppression and slavery? Will not their ears be even duller, their souls more heavy with the grossness of the idolatry around them? In reply God reveals Himself to Moses, and bids Moses in turn reveal Him to the children of Israel under the new name by which He will be known among them, "I AM THAT I AM."

God who in times past had spoken to their fathers now by this name teaches them something of His nature. He is a great and self-existent Being, not a cold force but a living Personality; unchangeable in power and in character, with an intense reality of Being, capable of loving and blessing. This revelation is the keynote of the great song which in ever-increasing fulness has come down the ages to man as each revelation of the character, purity, unchanging love, eternal Fatherhood and presence of God has been revealed. It sounds like a watchword in our ears, and although at times sin seems to have the pre-eminence, the personality of a living, loving God, immutable as the Rock

of Ages, has pervaded and will pervade the world until He finally becomes known to all as the one Eternal, all-embracing reality.

Further Charge given to Moses.

The distinct particulars are given to Moses as to what he is to do. The elders are to be gathered together, and they are to be told to make a petition to Pharaoh for three days' journey into the wilderness. Some have wondered why this was asked for instead of the real request, which was to leave Egypt altogether. It was probably given as a test to Pharaoh; in asking for a three days' journey the Israelites were demanding only what was within their rights. After all they were not slaves, they were a free people who had come down to sojourn in Egypt under the protection of Pharaoh. They had every right to take such a journey. If Pharaoh refused to hear this appeal he had condemned himself, and Israel had a right to carry matters further and to claim their entire freedom. God, who knew the heart of Pharaoh, knew that the appeal would be refused, and knew that it would be but the prelude to the deliverance of Israel, and, therefore, He directed that as the Egyptians had despoiled the Israelites, so the Israelites are to demand of them jewels of gold and jewels of silver, for this is the meaning of the word "borrow." It is the same word which is translated "ask" in the following passages, and by comparison the true meaning of it appears. Judges v. 25; 1 Kings iii. 10; 2 Kings ii. 9. In these passages the word is translated rightly, whereas in Exodus it is wrongly called "borrow."

Further Assurance given to Moses.

Moses still hesitates, probably not from unbelief, but from a feeling of responsibility at the gravity of the task before him. The help which he asked for was granted, and in reply to his appeal as to the difficulties which lay before him God granted him the power of working miracles.

Moses is the first man who is recorded as having worked miracles, and if we wonder why he should be so chosen out, we must remember, in the first place, how strongly the Spirit

of God rested upon him, and in the second place, how great was the work that lay before him.

Moses is to cast his rod upon the ground and it will become a serpent. The rod is a type of the shepherd; the serpent, probably similar to the asp, the well-known emblem of the kings of Egypt, which they wore upon their brow. Moses had led his sheep with a rod. He was to change this peaceful occupation and to control instead of a flock of sheep the hissing venomous anger of the Egyptian king and his subjects. If Moses would obey God and firmly grasp the serpent, that is to say, the power of Egypt, as he had firmly grasped the shepherd's rod, he would be able to subdue the Egyptians. The serpent that he had grasped would once again become a rod; that is to say, Moses, after he had encountered Pharaoh, would lead forth the children of Israel into the wilderness as a shepherd leads his sheep.

The second sign—the leprous hand—signified the work which Moses was called to do for the children of Israel. They were dwelling in the midst of Egypt, that is to say, in the midst of a mass of leprous corruption. They were themselves full of sin and in the midst of sin. Moses was bidden to carry them in his bosom and then to bring them out purified, separated from the sin of Egypt, and free to serve God in the wilderness.

The third sign was for the Egyptians. He was to take the water of the Nile, their idol god, and to pour it upon the ground, when it would become blood, a sign that the vengeance of God would fall upon the idolatry of Egypt, and that the god in whom they trusted would become their destruction.

Thus the first sign was a call of God to Moses himself; the second a call to the children of Israel; and the third a call to the Egyptians.

Still Moses hesitated. He had been forty years away from the court of Egypt, and he mistrusted his power. Stephen says that he was known when he was in Egypt as being mighty in word and deed; but he had been living in solitude for forty years, the habits of a solitary man had

grown upon him; he was slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

Moses in making these objections seems to think not of himself but only of the nature of the work lying before him and of the best way in which it can be done, and therefore God answers his thought, which is almost a prayer, by giving him an increase of power according to his need. He says that He will be with him, and that His mouth will teach Moses' mouth. This should have been more than sufficient, but at the last moment Moses' faith fails, and he pleads that another messenger may be chosen in his place. He seems, as it were, for the moment to have looked away from the revelation of God that had just been opened before his eyes, and away from the needs of the children of Israel and back upon himself, just as Peter looked down upon the waters; and so God's anger was kindled against him, and the privilege was taken from him of being the voice of God as well as the leader of the people, and the power is given to Aaron, who is to be with him, and to be his mouthpiece to the people. Thus judgment and mercy are mixed together. Moses was allowed the companionship and aid of his brother, but at the same time he had to bear with the sin and with the infirmity of his brother. Had Moses taken the full responsibility which God had been about to give him, some of the subsequent sin and suffering might have been averted; for it was Aaron who made the golden calf, and who thus drew down the wrath of God upon Israel.

Each one of us is called by God to do our own work for Him in the world. If we turn away from that work, if we look at ourselves, if we mistrust the power of God, and leave our work to another, we sin against God. We have the sorrow of seeing the work which by God's help we might have done, either left undone or carried out by another less competent to do it. "To every man his work." To every man throughout eternity, if that work is not done, either because he will not or he thinks he cannot, an everlasting sorrow, because he has failed and distrusted God, and has not given himself for his Master as his Master gave Himself for him.

LESSON VI.

EXODUS—CHAPTER IV.

AN AMBASSADOR OF GOD.

The Return into Egypt.

Moses had received his commission and knew that the power to execute it would lie not in himself but in God. As His ambassador he was to return to Egypt and to deliver the children of Israel. The Israelites would accept him as their leader, and Pharaoh would be forced to let the nation go forth out of Egypt. As Moses returned along his homeward path a multitude of thoughts must have rushed across him; great joy that his heart's desire was at last to be accomplished; joy that God had again spoken and acknowledged His people; that He had read the thoughts of Moses' heart; that the life-work which he had set himself to do was without doubt the work to which God had called him, and that this work would be brought to a successful issue; that the power of the tyrant would be broken and injustice and oppression laid low. Yet mingled with this joy was the consciousness of the difficulty of his task. For years and years he had been trying to face this, for forty years he had wandered in the wilderness and thought it impossible, knowing that in himself he could do nothing.

What change was there now? Was not Pharaoh just as powerful, the children of Israel as hopelessly crushed as ever? Was not he himself still a lonely exile, his very life in danger if he were recognised on his return to Egypt?

But although outwardly nothing seemed changed, yet inwardly he knew by faith that the impossible had become possible, and that he could arise and go forth to do it. The strength of his character comes out in his parting words to Jethro. Filled with the thought of the words which God had spoken to him and with the work before him, he might have neglected his duty towards his wife and children, and have set out upon his journey without delay, but he did not do so. He courteously asked permission from Jethro to leave him. From what he says it seems as though Jethro knew little or nothing about his life purpose, for Moses asks leave only to visit his brethren in Egypt. Jethro may have been unwilling to let so faithful a member of his household go, but hearing his words of quiet decision and seeing how firmly his mind was set upon his purpose, he bade him go in peace.

The Journey into Egypt.

As Moses turned in faith to obey God, the first word of encouragement came. "Pharaoh is dead," and the men who sought his life when he slew the Egyptians are dead also. Moses had passed out of sight in Egypt. The waters had closed over him as they close over almost every man in a great city or empire where life is carried on in haste and at pressure, and when he reappears in Egypt he will begin his work anew. The message which came to him is almost identical in word with the message which came to Joseph when God bade him return into Judea with Mary and the child Jesus, and there is a strange parallel between the journey of Moses into the land of Egypt with his wife and children, and that of Joseph and his family from Egypt into the promised land. Little could any one have thought that either party of wayfarers, as they made their way across the desert, were in time to change the face of the world, the one to take part in the other, to be the revelation of God to man.

Little would he have thought that Moses, with a shepherd's rod in his hand, was to call out a nation of slaves, and to lead them away to a new land in which they were to be a

free people, under the living God their Leader and their King ; or that our Saviour Christ, then a child, was by His death to set free God's spiritual children throughout the world and to call them from the slavery of sin into the freedom of sons of God.

Fuller Revelation given by God to Moses.

As Moses crossed the wilderness God spoke to him again and revealed still further what lay before him. He told him that Pharaoh would resist his call and that this resistance would be continued until at last, because he would not let God's first-born--that is to say, the children of Israel go, his own first-born, his eldest son, would be slain. In this message there are two points which especially call for attention. One, *the hardening of Pharaoh's heart*. This phrase occurs over and over again, and whilst we cannot fully understand its meaning, because it touches one of the deep mysteries of God, yet we can see something of its teaching for us. If God says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, how can Pharaoh obey His call, how can he be responsible for what he is doing? If he has no freewill of his own, why is he to be held responsible, why is he to be punished? It is best to face the fact as it stands, and to examine carefully what is recorded step by step. In the first place, we have to remember that human language halts when it attempts to describe the things of God, His being, character, attributes, and His dealings with man. Neither the mind nor the heart of man can conceive the things of God, still less can his tongue express them. Thus, as in the present instance, when Moses, under Divine inspiration, was telling the result of God's moral government of man, he speaks in words that seem to mean the action rather than the result. In the second place, although it is true that God prophesied that He would harden Pharaoh's heart, yet, when we read the story carefully, we find that He did not do so until after Pharaoh had deliberately and repeatedly hardened his own heart, and had absolutely refused to obey the voice of God, although he had been warned by miracles and signs. Thus, after the first plague, we find that "Pharaoh's

heart was strong," neither "did he set his heart to this also." Evidently Pharaoh deliberately refused to obey the call of Moses. After the second plague "he made his heart heavy." After the third plague, although his own magicians had warned him that the finger of God was upon him, "his heart was strong in him." After the fourth plague "he made his heart heavy," and after the fifth plague "he hardened his heart." The most terrible judgment that can fall upon any man is when, after repeated and wilful refusal to obey the voice of God, God's hand is, as it were, loosed from him and he is allowed to sink into his own obstinacy and rebellion, and this is exactly what during the latter plagues seems to have been the case with Pharaoh. In early times the call of God had come to him, the choice had been given him, and he had deliberately hardened his heart. In the latter plagues, as he had hardened his heart, God gave him up to his own wickedness, and hardened his heart to do according to his desires. It is true that from the beginning God had foreseen that Pharaoh would resist His power; but from our own dealings with one another we can understand how this would be, because we can often foretell the action of another from our knowledge of his character, and we must remember "that all things are open and manifest unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Even so, God knowing the uplifted pride of Pharaoh's heart, knew that he would not obey Him, and that after the invitation had been given and the miracles worked judgment would fall upon him. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear me and open the door I will come in unto him," said Christ. As we read the story of Pharaoh, the picture of Holman Hunt rises before us. We seem to see Christ turn away, and the door left fast closed, forever shut in. The second point we notice is that God calls Israel His "*first-born son*." The expression "first-born" seems to imply the elder of many brethren, an indication that in the course of time other nations would be called out of darkness into light, out of sin into free service, just as Israel, the first-born son, was now being called and delivered.

Further Journey of Moses.

The next verses are difficult to understand. It is generally thought that an illness from God fell upon Moses because he had not obeyed God's command and circumcised his son, and that when this sickness unto death came upon him he remembered his sin and obeyed the voice of God.

From this time forth it seems that in all probability Zipporah, his wife, returned to her father, and Moses went on his way alone. Apparently she was not in sympathy with his work, and would not have been a helpmeet to him, therefore she had to return, whilst Aaron his brother was associated with him in her stead. He came forward now to meet him and accompanied him on his way.

We can, in imagination, see the two brothers go forward across the desert on their way to Egypt. How much there was to relate on either side; Aaron knew the story of the oppression and misery of the children of Israel; Moses knew that God, so long silent, had spoken, and was about to send him and Aaron to deliver His people from their bondage.

We are told that the brothers rejoiced to see each other. They would rejoice still more at the thought of the deliverance which God was about to effect in Israel through them.

The Gathering together of the Children of Israel.

A great event now took place. The elders of the children of Israel were gathered together, and Aaron told them of the mighty deliverance about to take place, and confirmed what he was saying by the signs which God had promised should be given, in order to confirm his commission, and to show that he was their chosen leader. There must have been something exquisitely touching in this gathering. The joy of the elders when they learnt that the cry of the children of Israel had been heard by God; that God, who seemed to have forgotten them and left them in their misery, had looked upon them and was about to visit them. They bowed their heads and worshipped. A common thanksgiving for the deliverance about to be effected must have

filled their heart and mind. For the moment they would not look forward ; they could not foresee the fire of affliction through which they must pass before they could leave the land of Egypt and be free. Their feelings must have been of the same nature as the first great joy which overpowers a man's heart when he realizes that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for him. He rejoices in the message of love ; he rests upon it ; it is not necessary at that moment that he should realize the lifelong conflict with sin that lies before him, and the many struggles which he must pass through before his earthly fight is over and he stands in the presence of his Deliverer.

LESSON VII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER V.

THE EMBASSY TO PHARAOH.

The Meeting of Pharaoh and Moses.

The next scene is one of the strangest either in ancient or in modern history, and taxes all our power of imagination in order to realize it at all. We see Pharaoh at the height of his power, flushed with victory, glorying in the cities and buildings which he is erecting, confronted by Moses and Aaron. Two men, probably of noble aspect, but dressed as shepherds and who evidently belong to the despised race of the Israelites, stand before him and command him, the mighty monarch of Egypt, the beloved of the gods, to let a subject race of slaves, men who are necessary to his schemes of conquest and to the aggrandisement of his kingdom, go free. And they call upon him to do this in the name of their God.

In order to understand the full bearing of their request it is necessary to consider first the character of Pharaoh and then to see how the command touched not only his power as king, but also as one who held that he belonged to the royal race of the gods.

Assuming, therefore, as we have done before, that the Pharaoh to whom Moses spoke was Menephtah, the son of Rameses II., the account here given is peculiarly significant. Rameses had succeeded to the throne of Egypt when that kingdom was at the height of its power. Seti, his father, had commemorated his glory by the magnificent buildings

which he had erected. Rameses, his son, according to the legends which have come down to us, was a man naturally as proud and as self-glorious as his father, but not equally able on account of his wild and uncurbed passions; thus he is said even to have defied the Nile god and in his rage to have hurled his spear against that god because the waters of the river had risen too high, and according to tradition in consequence of his rash act the Nile god in revenge had stricken him with ten years of blindness. As a man, therefore, he was not likely to listen to reason or commands. But even had he been a calm and reasonable man, as a despotic king the command would have been very grievous. He would naturally wish to govern the kingdom on the same lines as his predecessors. Forced labour was necessary to him, both for his great buildings, for the working of his mines, and for the furtherance of his purposes of conquest and of war. If the Israelites were to revolt and successfully to assert their rights as an independent nation, then all the other tribes of his slaves might revolt also, and the kingdom be in large part dismembered. Pharaoh could not listen to Moses as a king, neither could he as one akin to the gods. Who was this God of the Hebrews? If Pharaoh obeyed His voice then both he and all the gods of Egypt were in subjection to the God of the Hebrews, and the fountain of his glory and power was dried up and gone. What power could Moses oppose to a man like this? Strong in himself, because of his intellectual power and training, he was infinitely stronger in the Divine power which upheld him. He was a man of strong convictions, who had acted and would act with all the intensity of his nature upon those convictions. Moses also had justice upon his side, for the children of Israel were not a conquered nation. They had come as sojourners into the land of Goshen. They were not captives, but as sojourners had the right to leave the country as they chose. They had come in a free people under their God, and had acknowledged Him so openly and in such a manner that the then Pharaoh had bent before Jacob and craved a blessing from him as the representative of his God. Apart from this, each nation

had a right to worship their own God, and for three and a half centuries the Israelites had been debarred from this worship. 'They now asked for three days' freedom in which to go forth and worship.

The Reply of Pharaoh.

But Pharaoh was keen enough to see that the whole question of the freedom of the nation was involved in this apparently innocent request. Like his predecessors, he decided to deal not justly but as he thought wisely, with them. He received the request with scorn, bade Moses and Aaron not hinder the people from their work, but themselves take up their burden. At the same time he decided once and for all to crush the spirit of the Israelites as his predecessors had crushed it, only in order to do so he would this time turn his hand not upon the little children, but upon the whole nation, and oppress even the taskmasters, the leaders of the people. The straw hitherto given and used by the Israelites in the construction of the bricks was no longer to be granted by the government. The people were told that they must gather straw and any kind of material which they could obtain, and use it to construct their sun-burnt bricks. The number told off to gather material naturally lessened the number who could be employed in the construction of the bricks. The task was, therefore, work as hard as they would, left day by day unfinished. The people strove in vain and were spurred on by the taskmasters, and the taskmasters in turn were lashed by Pharaoh's agents.

The proof of the truth of this oppression can be seen at any time. Bricks have been taken from buildings which were erected by the Israelites, and in which the change in the making of the bricks spoken of here can be seen. Specimens of them are shown in the British museum in England. Harper says, "The lower courses of these walls and for some distance up, are of well-made bricks with chopped straw in them; but higher up the courses of brick are not so good, the straw is long and scanty, and the last courses have no straw at all, but have sedges, rushes, and water plants in the mud."

The Despair of the Leaders.

In the depth of their misery the officers and representatives of the children of Israel gathered up their courage and came before Pharaoh and remonstrated with him. Will he not listen? Will he not see the injustice, the impossibility of his requirements? But he is too heavily angered, he will hear not a word. As they have dared to defy him, he will crush them in return. In their misery the leaders turn from Pharaoh to Moses, and as they appeal to him it is pathetic to see how in the midst of their distress they have not altogether lost their new-born hope in God. They lay the whole blame upon Moses and Aaron, and attribute it to their misconduct of the matter. What can Moses say in reply? He seems to have been overwhelmed by their distress. He had obeyed the voice of God, but the result of doing so had apparently been to inflict nothing but injury upon the helpless Israelites, and to make what had been an apparently impossible deliverance even more impossible. How would it all end? Would the Israelites again trust and listen to him? Would the Pharaoh of the present oppression be even more bitterly turned against him than the Pharaoh of former days when he had slain the Egyptian? In this the hour of his deepest distress he calls upon God, and lays the matter in all its hopelessness before Him.

The Answer of God to Moses.

The answer of God comes back to Moses with a ring of confidence, nay almost of triumph. Pharaoh may rage and set himself against Israel, but God will break him with a rod of iron and dash him in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the very fact that God is speaking at all there is comfort, for although God had spoken in the wilderness, and Moses had felt His presence at Sinai, it is not recorded that he had as yet heard His voice or especially realized His presence in the tumult of Egypt, in the midst of the sin and tyranny around him. He tells Moses that however helpless he may seem to be, he is to go forward, because his cause is invincible. As little could Pharaoh stop the rising of the Nile, or the

succession of the seasons, or any of the workings of God in nature, as he could stop the purposes of God either in the spiritual world or in the world of nations. The strong hand which controlled the universe of nature was about to intervene and control the universe of man. It is not a question, as Moses might have thought, of any failure on his own part, or of his unsuccessful pleading with Pharaoh, or of the way in which he had dealt with him. It is rather that God is about to rise and to become known not only throughout Israel but also to the Egyptians as the Great Existent, Conscious, Living God. And further, Moses was to know the signification and the meaning of the name Jehovah, that name which had once or twice been revealed to man, but then as a name rather than as a living force. He was about to know Jehovah, God, the Covenant-keeper, the Redeemer, the Saviour, who would rescue Israel from the bondage of Egypt, and save them with outstretched hand from the oppressor. In order to confirm what God had said He gives a sevenfold or complete promise: "I will bring you out; I will rid you out of their bondage; I will redeem you; I will take you to Me; I will be to you a God; I will bring you in; I will give it to you." And He binds this sevenfold promise at either end with the eternal declaration, "I am the Lord, I am the Lord."

The Answer of Israel.

Surely joy and renewed hope must have come to Moses as he went to give this message of joy to the children of Israel. But what he could hear and believe, because his ear was attuned to the voice of God, and because he knew God as a living reality, the Israelites could not listen to at all. In their anguish of spirit, in their cruel bondage, how could they hear or turn to a leader who had as yet brought them nothing but distress? Then leaving Israel bowed down in its misery, God bade Moses turn from them, and accompanied by Aaron, once again go unto Pharaoh and demand the freedom of His people. Moses asks how can this thing be? If Israel would not hear of what avail is it to go to Pharaoh, for his pride and anger have already

risen hotly against Moses? But the command of God is not to be stayed either by the anguish or dulness of spirit of Israel or by the pride and obstinacy of Pharaoh. Moses is given his charge, and is told that God will Himself open the way for the effectual working of His command.

"Then the Lord awaked as One out of Sleep."

This prayer of Moses to God and the reply which comes to him seem like a calm before a storm. From this time on, without respite, the judgments of God were about to descend until His purpose was accomplished. Though Pharaoh did not know it, every act which he had done had increased the spirit of revolt against him, and his last refusal had brought the rebellion of the Israelites to a final head, for by it he had united the whole nation in misery. It was no longer merely a question of the oppressed working people, but it was now also one of their leaders and their task-masters. They had been beaten just as much as the people, and the iron had entered into their souls also. From this time forward there would evidently be no respect of persons with Pharaoh. All were lashed together in one common misery by Pharaoh's whips. As soon as God opened a door of hope there was no question but that the whole nation would respond to the call.

The World-Long Struggle for Liberty and for Religious Freedom.

As we read this fifth chapter of Exodus we seem to be hearing an echo of the great questions of to-day. For after all, the struggle between Pharaoh and Israel has been the struggle of every century and of every community of man against their oppressors. The question is one at bottom of freedom of body and freedom of soul. As the knowledge of God comes in, and men realize that they are all made in the image of God, they are certain to claim the right to worship Him according to their conscience. If that right is granted it ought to bring with it a check upon the mutual relations which exist between the employer and the employed. All work is done in the eye of God, all men

are before Him and responsible to Him ; the employer has to see to it that he deals justly with his servants, the servant that he renders just service to his employer. But like Pharaoh of old, men get impatient of this control because it checks their greed of wealth and their power of oppression. On the other hand, the servant has to deal justly by his master, because he too recognizes the overruling power of God which demands a service beyond that of the eye-pleaser. Just in proportion as all recognize and respond to the Divine standard of right and wrong, will happiness and peace prevail and right relations of freedom and a mutual sense of responsibility be maintained.

LESSON VIII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER VII.

THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE.

"A God to Pharaoh."

Once again the command came to Moses to go into the presence of Pharaoh. In former days when Moses offended Pharaoh and slew the Egyptian, although he was a prince and a popular leader of the people, he had been forced to flee from the country. Why did not Pharaoh attack him again and attempt to destroy him? Pharaoh had all the strength of Egypt at his command, and yet he allowed Moses to remain unharmed. He went in and out of the presence of Pharaoh at will, and no one dared to lay a hand upon him. It seems very strange that it should be so, for the whole rebellion would apparently have been quelled at once had Moses been killed or banished, and Israel forever have fallen under the power of the Pharaohs. The answer to this is given in the opening words of chapter vii., "See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh." God had surrounded Moses with Divine mystery, so that even Pharaoh did not dare to touch him. Both he and Aaron, as the messengers of God, had freedom to speak and to attack the strongholds of sin and to defy Pharaoh to his face. Pharaoh, on the other hand, was as strong in his rebellion against God as they were in their attack upon the strongholds of sin. Every successive stroke of judgment would ring from him at most a temporary concession, but never one spark of true repentance, never one word of willing submission to the command. Thus

the great battle would be fought between the representative of the world power and the representative of the Godhead, and the battle cry of Israel would be, "Let my people go that they may serve Me." There is something awe-inspiring in this national revolt, in this national cry. Its echoes mingle with the cry of the Albigenses, of the Huguenots, of the enslaved negro, of the Russian serf of to-day, of all whose blood has flowed age after age in the same struggle for liberty and life.

The Challenge of Moses to Pharaoh.

Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, and when Pharaoh demanded from them a sign they were permitted by God to work the first miracle and to turn Aaron's rod into a serpent. This was the type of the judgment about to fall upon Egypt, but it was not taken as such by the Court, for the magicians the representatives of idolatry and of evil spirits, cast down their rods and they became serpents also. How this was effected we do not know. Some suppose that the serpents were stiffened so that they seemed like rods, as the magicians in the East now stiffen serpents so that they resemble rods, which when thrown upon the ground become alive again. Others think that the priests were in communication with evil spirits, who enabled them to imitate Moses. The power of God seemed to challenge the power of evil, which power responded by producing a like result. But not altogether like, for Aaron's miracle went further, and his rod swallowed up their rods. A sign that the power of God would destroy the power of idolatry. Pharaoh refused to see Divine interposition in the miracle, and would not hearken to Moses.

The Ten Plagues.

Before considering the Ten Plagues it would be well to consider the time of year at which they occurred and to observe their general nature and character.

The period of the year at which the plagues took place was probably between the months of June and April, that is to say, between one harvest and the other, for we read that

the children of Israel were sent to gather stubble, showing that the harvest was over. Therefore, allowing a little time to elapse, June seems the probable month for the first plague. The last blow must have been struck about April, because "the barley was in ear and the flax was balled."

We notice one or two chief characteristics in these plagues. First, God showed Himself as the Lord of all creation. We must remember that these plagues were specially intended to strike the idolatry of Egypt, and to show that the one true God was the God of all the earth. In the land of Egypt, the river, the sun, animal life, each manifestation of nature, was in itself a god to the Egyptians. But Jehovah showed Himself to be not a god like unto one of theirs, or such a god as the Canaanites imagined Him to be, a god of the hills but not of the valleys, He was Lord of all creation, moving and governing the whole universe at His will; He showed that the blessings which they had received from Him without acknowledgment could at His will be turned into a curse and lay them prostrate before His power. Secondly, we find in these miracles that those powers of nature which the Egyptians had idolatrously worshipped each in turn was raised to become a curse and a scourge, thus showing what idolatry really is. The Nile god became a river of blood; the sacred frog, the sign of fruitfulness, represented on lotus leaves for worship, made every place an abomination; the lice defiled the sacred priests and the sacred bulls; and lastly, the sun god withdrew his light and all was darkness.

Further, these plagues punished the Egyptians for the particular sin which they had committed in connection with it. They had thrown the babes of the children of Israel into the river, and therefore when God arose to judgment that river became a river of blood. They had oppressed and impoverished the Israelites so that they dwelt in mud huts, therefore their houses, through frogs, became more loathsome than the poorest hut of the Israelites. They had tortured the Israelites, therefore the lice and the boils and blains became a torture to their skin even worse than the whips which tormented the Israelites. They had destroyed

and taken the wealth of the Israelites ; their cattle were destroyed by murrain and by tempest. They had terrified the whole nation so that it had been in an agony of despair, therefore darkness was about to fall upon the land for three days, whilst through that darkness an agony of horror passed over it. They had bereaved the mothers of their little children ; there will not be one house in Egypt in which a mother will not be left desolate.

“He doth not afflict willingly.”

As we look at these miracles they fill us with fear and awe. They seem so far, so very far away from the miracles of Christ. Can the God of Israel who changed the laws of nature so that they worked such awful misery, be the same God who a little later changed these same laws of nature so that they brought healing, food, and blessing ; the same God who turned the water into blood, who when He first appeared in human flesh turned water into wine ? But the answer is that God deals according to the purpose which He has in view. To those who are wilfully obstinate to the command of God there comes only a fearful looking for of judgment, which will one day fall upon them. To those who listen to the voice of Christ all things work together for good.

The Coming of the First Plague.

In the early morning Pharaoh went out, probably according to the custom of the Egyptian kings, to worship the Nile god. As he went he found himself confronted by Moses and Aaron, who called upon him to obey the voice of God, and when he refused they warned him that the waters of the Nile would be turned into blood and that the fish which were in the river would die, so that the great *god*, the source of fertility and wealth to the whole nation, would become an abomination, and the people would loath to drink of the waters of the river. What they said took place. Aaron stretched out his rod and the ponds became blood, so that the fish died and the river became an abomination. What help could Pharaoh find in his

magicians? They in like manner used their enchantments, but they could not remove the curse which had fallen upon the river. They could only increase it, they could turn more water into blood ; they could not remove the curse of blood from the river. It is generally supposed that the river at the command of Aaron became red, by the presence of small plants and animalculae, as also from the red earth which the swollen waters carried down into it. A similar phenomenon still takes place at times ; but this was a miracle, it was not a mere natural phenomenon. In the first place, it came at the outstretch of Aaron's rod, and, therefore, from its suddenness was a miracle. In the second place, it was beyond the ordinary visitation, because a change of a poisonous nature must have taken place in the water, since all the fish which were in the river died. The exact manner in which the miracle was performed is of no consequence to us. What is of consequence to us is that all Egypt knew that a judgment had fallen upon the country directly from the hand of the God of the Hebrews. All the water throughout the country was polluted and the people were forced to dig around the river so that they might get water which, having been filtered through the sand, would be free from the deposit contained in it and comparatively clean.

The Second Plague.

Moses and Aaron once again appeared before Pharaoh, and again as the ambassadors of God commanded him in the name of God to let His people go that they might serve Him. They warned him that if he refused to let them go a plague or stroke of frogs would fall upon the country ; that is to say, from the river Nile now corrupt from the fish which had died in it, there would come forth a multitude of frogs, and these frogs would be a plague upon Pharaoh and upon his people, for they would infest the palace just as much as the humblest dwelling-place in the land. Pharaoh seems to have given no reply, and, therefore, the command was given that Aaron should stretch forth his rod over the streams, rivers, and ponds, and cause the frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. As he did this the magicians, in order to show that

they had a like power given to them from their gods, challenged Moses, and brought forth frogs also. By doing this they seemed to claim that Jehovah was a god like unto their gods, for they too had turned water into blood, and they had produced frogs—so far this was true, but if they were the representative gods of Egypt why did they not confer a benefit instead of increasing a plague? Why did they not protect both Pharaoh and the country from an adverse influence? Why did they not turn back the curse instead of increasing it? Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron in haste and entreated that the plague might be turned away, and Moses, probably in order that Pharaoh might be honoured in the presence of his court, replied, "Glory over me"; "have thou this honour over me," that is to say, he gave Pharaoh the privilege of saying at what time the plague should be removed, so that his command might for the moment seem to be in unison with that of Jehovah. The frog is said to have been sacred in Upper Egypt and to have been worshipped upon their sacred lotus leaf as a sign of multiplication and as a symbol of creation. One wonders whether the Egyptians, regarding the frogs as gods, were afraid of them, and tried to free themselves from them when they entered their houses? It seems almost certain that they must in despair have turned against them and have done what they could to kill them and get rid of them; at any rate we know that they became an abomination to them, for although in reply to Moses' prayer the plague ceased, still the frogs were not removed out of the land, but were gathered together in heaps and stank, so that the whole country was unbearable on account of them. But when Pharaoh saw that there was a breathing space, he sent no message of repentance, but hardened his heart.

The Third Plague.

It is said that "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." After each two plagues that descended upon the land of Egypt a third came without any warning or possibility of averting it. The fertile soil, the glory and

wealth of Egypt, now like the river, became a curse to the land. The dust turned into lice, and the lice swarmed over man and beast, making everyone loathsome, defiling everything and making it unclean. The priests of Egypt had held it to be a part of their religion to guard themselves from their uncleanness, and in order to do so had been accustomed to shave themselves every third day so that they might be absolutely clean. Now they were not only unclean themselves, but their sacred bulls were also, and these they were accustomed to guard even more jealously than their own persons. In their distress to whom could they turn for help? To the Nile god—to the river—or to the bull gods? They loathed themselves, and they loathed everything around them. They also found that their own power was beginning to slacken. Neither by fraud nor by the aid of evil spirits could they increase the plague as they had increased the former ones. They had to stand helpless before it. They owned that the stroke came from a God greater than their gods. They said, "This is the finger of God," and they seem to have pleaded with Pharaoh to give way, for it is recorded that "he hearkened not unto them." Once again Pharaoh hardened his heart. He refused at the close of these three plagues as he had refused after the first plague to "set his heart to this also," that is to say, he refused to think the matter out, he refused to see the cause of the judgment which was falling upon the land.

LESSON IX.

EXODUS, CHAPTER VIII. 20—EXODUS X.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

The Fourth Plague.

Once more Pharaoh arose early in the morning and came down to the Nile, and again Moses and Aaron met him and warned him that another plague was about to descend. They warned him also that it would be evidently seen throughout the whole country that the plague came directly from the hand of God, for it would descend upon Egypt only, the land of Goshen in which the children of Israel dwelt would be exempt. From this time forward we see this distinction made between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The blow struck more directly at Pharaoh and at his servants, and, therefore, was more merciful, because it was more unmistakably a judgment, and as such more likely to lead him to repentance. "Swarms," whether of flies, or, as some think, of a kind of noisome small beast or beetle much worshipped by the Egyptians, descended everywhere and made everything unclean. If, as some think, they were dog flies, they would deposit their eggs in the eyelids and corners of the eyes, and thus produce severe inflammation wherever they settled. This plague is described in the 78th Psalm as the descending of "divers sorts of flies" "which devoured them," and was the first to bring from Pharaoh an unwilling consent to let the people go. They may go, but they are not to go very far away. This promise, however, lasted only until

the plague was removed, and as soon as the country was free from it Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

The Fifth Plague.

Moses and Aaron once again stood before Pharaoh. As we read of God's continued messages and patience towards Pharaoh we cannot help thinking of His like patience towards the Israelites in the later days:—"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place," compare our Lord's cry "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" Again Pharaoh was commanded to let the people go, again he refused, and a terrible murrain falls upon the cattle and upon all beasts. Most probably it was some form of cattle plague which by a miracle came suddenly upon the whole land of Egypt, but did not extend to the land of Goshen. There might have been some natural cause connected with it; that is to say, a disease of this kind was likely to break out owing to the polluted river, the dead frogs and the swarms of flies; but the suddenness with which it came, and the equal suddenness with which it was removed, shows that it fell directly from the hand of God.

The Sixth Plague.

The sixth plague, like the third, fell without any previous warning. Moses and Aaron were directed to take handfuls of ashes of the furnace and to sprinkle them toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. Many explanations have been given by various writers as to the signification of the handfuls of ashes. Some see in them the furnace of affliction through which Israel was passing; others, that as they were thrown upward they typified the pyramids and buildings which the Egyptians had reared towards Heaven; others, that they were an imitation of the sacrifices of burned human bodies—often those of the Hebrews—that were offered, to the god of Evil, the ashes of the victims being scattered in the air. But whatever signification the

ashes had in the sight of Pharaoh and of his courtiers, they produced no effect. He did not repent, although they were followed by the breaking forth of a boil upon man and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt, and even the magicians were compelled to leave the court because the boil was upon them just as much as upon the rest of the Egyptians. Nevertheless, Pharaoh refused to submit. He may have chosen to think that this plague had a natural explanation, and that the pollution of the river had worked the defilement and consequent disease throughout the country, although in his own heart he must have known from the suddenness and violence of the disease that it could not be explained by any natural cause.

The Seventh Plague.

The first six plagues had followed slowly, one after another, and divided by intervals of varying lengths, but from this time forward there was a change. Stroke followed stroke with swift rapidity. The hand of God was also very evidently shown. No casuistry can find a natural explanation for the terrible plague which Moses told Pharaoh would descend and destroy both man and beast. Also a warning was given showing that these miracles were not performed in vengeance, but in order to arouse the dead conscience of the Egyptians to a knowledge of the omnipotence of God. An opportunity was given to the Egyptians as well as to the Israelites to escape. Thunder, lightning, and hail were to descend upon the whole land, but those who had learned a lesson from the previous miracles might bring in their cattle from the field, and by doing this might witness that they feared the word of God, and escape. We find that some feared the word of the Lord, but others "regarded not the word of the Lord, and left their servants and their cattle in the field." Meantime Moses stretched forth his rod and the thunder and lightning and hail descended upon the earth with a fury so terrible that it ran along the ground and was mingled with fire as it

went. The lightning and the hail seemed to intermingle and produced terrible destruction, not only upon man and beast, but upon the trees and plants also. An ordinary storm accompanied with thunder and lightning awakens deep emotions at any time, and seems to be the voice of God speaking in the land. If this is the case when God's judgments are not especially falling upon a country, how much more would it be the case in Egypt at this time, especially when we know that hail-storms with thunder and lightning are at any time uncommon there. Pharaoh was terrified, and sent for Moses and Aaron, confessed his sin, owned that God was righteous, and entreated that the thunder and hail might be removed. If it were removed he promised to give instant obedience and to let the people go. Moses promised to intercede with God for him, but at the same time warned him that he knew that as soon as the plague was removed Pharaoh would harden his heart and refuse to let the people go. Nevertheless, at his word, fearless of the storm, Moses and Aaron went outside the city and stretched out their hands before God until the plague ceased, but, as they had foreseen, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

The Eighth Plague.

Once again Moses stood before Pharaoh. With what dread must Pharaoh and his courtiers have seen each appearance of Moses and Aaron, knowing, as they did, that a mysterious power of a God unequalled in majesty and wrath was represented by them. This time their message had a ring of terror in it greater than ever before, for Moses warned Pharaoh that if he did not let the children of Israel go a plague more dreaded than any in the East, that is to say, the plague of locusts, would descend upon the land. There was no longer any question about the attitude of Pharaoh's servants. The mere thought of this plague made them entreat Pharaoh to let the people go. "How long shall this man be a snare upon us?" "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt

is destroyed?" So terrible was the thought of the locusts that Pharaoh himself yielded, and said that all the men of Israel might go and serve their God, but they might not take their wives, their children, or their cattle with them. Moses refused the terms offered, and claimed the freedom of the whole nation—men, women, and children. With a feeling akin to despair the courtiers must have watched Moses go out of the court, and, as they anxiously looked towards Heaven, seen the dreaded locusts come up in their bands, darkening the whole earth, and settling down upon trees, herbs, even entering into the houses and covering the face of the whole earth so that it was dark like night. There was not an instant to be lost, or the whole country would be ruined for ever. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, vowed that he would let the children of Israel go, confessed his sin, and entreated for pardon. But no sooner were the locusts turned away with a mighty west wind and cast into the sea than Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let the children of Israel go. We can see how strongly the power of evil was working in Pharaoh in his utter untruthfulness, and the way in which he broke the most solemn pledges which he made.

The Ninth Plague.

Finally, without warning an awful darkness fell over the whole country. Travellers give us some description of the onrush of sandstorms, in which they tell us that a darkness accompanied with oppression of spirit settles down upon the country, a darkness sometimes so great that not even a hand can be seen before the face. But this darkness which fell upon the land of Egypt was infinitely more awful even than this. It seems as if it was impossible to describe it in words; the nearest impression which can be given is that it was darkness which could be felt, so great that for three days none could find courage to move from the place where he was when it descended. Even Pharaoh was powerless under the oppression, and he consented to let men, women, and children go

if only the herds were left behind ; but how could Israel sacrifice to God without their cattle ? Pharaoh must have trembled before he was willing to consent even as far as this, but the chief cause of his terror must have been that the sun-god in whom he especially trusted had failed him ; remembering this, we can understand the effect of this ninth stroke, and why it affected him more than any of the others.

“He sent darkness, and it was dark.”

The *Expositor's Bible* tells us that among the tombs of the kings of Thebes there is still to be seen fresh and life-like an admirably sculptured effigy of king Menephtah. His face is weak and cruel, and over his head there is the inscription : “Cherished by the sun in the great abode.” There is also, he tells us, another inscription, delineated by the court sculptor, in which he stands with his hand stretched out in worship, and under it is written : “He adores the sun, he worships Hor of the solar horizon.” The sun being, therefore, the great object of Pharaoh's worship, what could he do when the light of it was taken away ? He felt that he was deserted by his last refuge, the greatest of all his gods, that the face of that god was turned away from him, and in the midst of all his suffering, when one by one the other gods had turned from him, that even this last and greatest was gone also. He seems to have been maddened by rage and despair, and yet even in the depths of this despair he determined, despite all, still to clutch at the wealth and power which this huge slave race of Israel represented. One more resource was left to him. He would cut himself away from Moses and Aaron. He would see their faces no more, in the vain hope that by doing so he could cut himself away from the God whom they represented and from His judgments. He forgot that they had interceded again and again for him, and turned away the judgment of God from him. One thought alone possessed him, and in his wrath and in his despair he hurled out the terrible words, “Get thee from me, thou shalt see my

face no more." Pharaoh's words rang out like a death knell, and they were followed by the tenth and last plague.

The three days' journey.

The Israelites asked for permission to go three days' journey into the wilderness. How much was implied in their request? Was it a request made with intention to deceive and to take advantage of the privilege if it was accorded to them?

In the first place it must be noted that Moses made no suggestion or promise of return. This comes out more clearly when we remember that "the three days' journey" was probably then as now the generally understood way of speaking of the march to Elim, for Elim is the first halting place of any account where water and refreshment can be found. In the second place, even if there was an implied promise of return, Pharaoh knew as well as they did that they would come back only in the character of a victorious nation to claim emancipation, that is to say, religious as well as national freedom.

LESSON X.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XI.

THE THICK DARKNESS.

“When the Lord arose to judgment.”

As we read the story of the plagues we are apt to think that they followed one after another in quick succession, and we do not realize that there was a space of ten long weary months during which Pharaoh steadily refused to obey the voice of God, and, in consequence, blow after blow, each in its appointed time, fell upon him and upon the nation. This explains why Pharaoh hoped again and again that, the punishment being removed, he could evade letting the people go ; the interval also makes each act one of more wilful and deliberate disobedience. This slow, steady falling of judgment comes in the same way upon individuals as upon nations. God's mill grinds slowly, but it grinds exceeding small. Men may refuse to listen to conscience, and apparently succeed in their rebellion, but the long purpose of God meantime goes on, whether that purpose is one which concerns the individual only or the world in general also.

“He weighed a path to His anger.”

Pharaoh refused, and apparently succeeded in his refusal ; that is to say, he did not let the children of Israel go, and they still remained in the land ; but meantime *God* hardened his heart, or, in other words, let him sink under his own self-will until it was too late, and what would have been accomplished

without sorrow was accomplished in the desolation of the land. As each successive punishment fell Pharaoh yielded as much and only as much as he thought was necessary in order that the avenging hand might be turned away, then when the punishment was removed, either he seemed to think that the whole difficulty was at an end, or he persuaded himself that the misfortune had come from natural causes, and, having been averted, would not return. By hardening himself or by refusing to think, he was unable to see that plague after plague increased in severity, and one by one came more distinctly and heavily from the hand of God. Moreover, in the latter plagues a distinction was made between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The Israelites were free from the plagues of flies, murrain, and boils. During the plague of hail the cattle of the Israelites were saved, and also those of the Egyptians who obeyed the voice of God. There was light in the land of Israel, and darkness in Egypt. But, despite all this, neither Pharaoh nor Egypt would acknowledge the supremacy of God, and, therefore, the judgments continued, and would continue until either the Egyptians repented, or until obedience to the command was wrung from them, and they themselves thrust out the people, whom they had not allowed to go. They must thrust them out and bid them go and take with them all that they possessed.

How can we read this story without recognizing in it the experience of our past lives, some of the dealings of God in our own hearts? We know that such and such a thing is sin against God, but we refuse to let it go. We yield here a little and there a little when conscience oppresses us, or when we are suffering from what we believe to be the punishment of our sins, but that is not the end. The struggle will continue until either with full heart we obey the voice of God and let His power transform our lives, or else we sink down under our own self-will and become dead and at rest in the midst of our sin.

The final Scene between Moses and Pharaoh.

A thick darkness had overspread the land of Egypt for three days. The land of Egypt is condemned, a thick

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mourning of darkness falls upon it, mourning for the first-born who are about to die; mourning for the land in which so great a witness of God has been given, and which is about to be left to the darkness it has chosen.

When, the darkness was intolerable, Pharaoh sent for Moses, and one of the strangest scenes took place that has ever been recorded in history. We see the audience chamber, possibly a vast hall filled with a darkness which could be felt, and which obscured any attempt which might have been made to illuminate it. We see Pharaoh cast down not only by the darkness which surrounded him, and by the depression of spirit which accompanies darkness, but still more by terror, not only at what had passed, but also at what might be yet to come. He is almost at the point of yielding, when he finds himself once more face to face with Moses and Aaron. This presence of Moses seems to have appalled both Pharaoh and his servants; he was "a god unto Pharaoh," a spiritual power dwelt within him far mightier than any that he had before experienced. Men like Moses, Wesley, Gordon, and others, who have gone from the presence chamber of God, and stood out as champions for the right, have had a spiritual power over others which could be felt, for they filled with dread those who like Pharaoh were conscious of and hardened in their sin, even whilst they illuminated and quickened those who would fear God and were open to their influence. Thus the two men stood once again opposite one another as they stood on that morning when Moses went out to the water side to warn Pharaoh before the first plague fell; but now the final issue has come, and Moses strives with one last mighty effort to move the heart of Pharaoh, and to avert the awful agony which otherwise he knows must fall, not only upon Pharaoh, but also upon the whole Egyptian nation.

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day."

"He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." In order to understand the resistance of Pharaoh, it is best to read

the commission given to Moses in the eleventh chapter before reading the close of the tenth chapter. Moses tells Pharaoh the disaster which is about to fall upon the land, and strives in vain to save him. When men are without faith in God it is impossible to force them to obey Him. Christ said that even if a man rose from the dead they would not repent. So in the case of Pharaoh, although God had done so many mighty works among the Egyptians, and although Moses painted so vividly the awful doom which was impending over the country, still Pharaoh clung to what he knew was the great source of his wealth and power, and refused to let the subject nation go. He thought he would make a compromise, that he would outwit them ; he would keep their cattle, and then, even if they went, they would surely return. Finding that this was of no avail, at last, as weak men do, because he cannot prevail, he turns upon the messenger of God, and attacks him because he cannot attack his message. Like Jehoiachim, who took a penknife and cut the offending roll in pieces and burned it upon the hearth, so Pharaoh bids Moses depart from his presence for ever, and Moses, in hot anger, tells him that he will see his face no more. Moses was probably filled with despair and anger at the thought of the injustice which was being done to Israel as well as with sorrow at the suffering that was about to fall upon the Egyptians, for we know that he was a man keenly sensitive to oppression and wrong. He would be stirred to the depths of his nature when he felt that this, his last effort to save Egypt, was useless, because of the hopeless obstinacy, the stubborn greed of a tyrant.

LESSON XI.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XII.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

The contrast between Israel and Egypt.

From the darkness which hung like a heavy pall over the land of Egypt, we turn to the sunshine and light in the land of Goshen. We pass from the terrible scene in which the wrath of God was about to descend upon Egypt into the joy and calm of the redemption feast in Israel. For, indeed, the contrast was greater spiritually even than physically between the two countries. The spiritual light into which the Israelites were about to be called was brighter and more full of promise than the sunshine which illuminated their country, whilst the spiritual and physical darkness of Egypt grew ever deeper and deeper. On the one side, death, on the other a type of salvation and hope, not only for Israel but for the whole world.

The Ordinance of the Passover.

The month in which the passover took place was from that time forward to be counted as the first month of the year, that is to say, the reckoning of time was changed and the Passover Feast was to be marked as the greatest event which up to that time had taken place in Israelite history, and not only in Israelitish history, but also in the history of the world, for, as well as looking back to the salvation of Israel, it also looked forward to a greater salvation which was one day to come. This reckoning was changed after Christ came, and the Christian world has since agreed to date everything from that advent—*anno domini* (the year of our Lord).

Preparation for the Passover Feast.

In thinking over the ordinance of the Passover it is well to place ourselves for the time being in the household of one of the Jewish families, and, as a member of it, see each successive event, and, as it came, mark its signification. Three days before the darkness descended upon the land of Egypt the head of each household would select a lamb, with great care, one in its full vigour, a male of the first year, without blemish or spot. He did this by command; he could not have known that the Lamb prefigured Christ, the Redeemer who was to be without blemish and without spot.

For four days the lamb remained in the household, and became, as it were, a member of the family. There may have been sorrow amongst the children when they knew that it must be killed. But the lamb must be slain, for no gift of money or of jewels, nothing but a life, could symbolise the atonement for the sin of the whole household.

“We, being many, are one body in Christ.”

The head of the house would then, if his family were not a large one, summon others to share the Passover with him, for none might eat it alone. There was to be a union either of the household, if it were large enough, or if not, of various households, at the sacrifice. It was a union of man with man, a common danger, a common sacrifice, a common salvation. None of the lamb must be left over until the morning, for fear lest any profane or superstitious use might be made of it.

“I know him that he will command his children and his household after him.”

The head of the family had to sacrifice the lamb because as head of the house he was also its priest, and as such belonged to the priesthood of the Israelitish nation. By his act he showed his responsibility and his God-given authority over his house. This comes out more fully in later history in the ordinances which were given to the head of each household when he was commanded to teach his children as they ate their Passover Feast about this

solemn night, and what it signified to the individual as well as to the nation. Would that the head of each household in these New Testament days had as strong a sense of responsibility as the head of the Israelitish household of the Old Testament. How often the head of the household of to-day lets slip his authority, and instead of teaching his children about the eternal truth and the signification of all that has been handed down to him, leaves it to anyone, either within or without his house, who will undertake the task, taking little trouble to ascertain how far those who instruct his children understand the things whereof they speak.

“Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins.”

When the lamb had been slain, the blood was put into a basin, and, a bunch of hyssop having been taken, it was sprinkled on the door-posts. The head of the household thus openly avowed his faith in God and his obedience to that God whom the Egyptians were defying. By sprinkling the blood upon the door-posts he showed also that he recognised that he an Israelite as well as the Egyptians had sinned against God and that but for the innocent life which had been slain the destroying angel would pass in and destroy the first-born of his house.

Returning into the house the lamb would then be roasted whole, unmixed with water, because it was a sacrifice, and when it had been placed upon the table the whole family would be gathered together around it, including in later years even the stranger, who, if he were circumcized, might also partake of the Feast.

“The leaven of malice and wickedness.”

The lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. All leaven had been put away from the household, a sign that everyone in it was to be separated from sin. The bitter herbs which accompanied the Feast represented the bitterness and the bondage of sin.

“Your loins girded about.”

A strange group would be gathered round the table, for the Feast was to be eaten in haste, every man with his loins girt, and ready to depart. By these preparations for their journey and by their haste the Israelites typified that they knew that their lives were given back to them in order that they might depart from Egypt and from sin; they were not given back to them so that they might tarry and loiter amongst the Egyptians, from whose tyranny they had been redeemed.

As they stood around the board there must have been a hush of awe and of trembling over all. They knew that there was safety for themselves because of the blood sprinkled on the door-posts; neither father nor mother watched with dread the face of their eldest son for fear lest he should grow pale as the shadow of death fell upon him. With joy they looked upon the faces gathered around the board; with trembling they waited for the wail of anguish which all too surely must arise in the land of Egypt.

The Further Signification of the Passover.

The Israelites must have understood very imperfectly the signification of what they were doing. This much they knew, that they had incurred the penalty of death and that an innocent lamb had been sacrificed in their stead. They knew also that those who accepted that sacrifice were saved and those who did not were destroyed.

The Passover Feast has always stood as one of the great mysteries of eternal verity. One after another of the watchmen who were set upon the mountains of Israel caught a gleam of its light and rejoiced to see it. A fuller light was revealed at the Great Passover Feast the night before the Crucifixion—a light which has increased and will increase until it shines in its full beauty at the Great Feast of the Redeemed.

All through Jewish history the prophets and men of God pondered over and brought forward sign after sign from this Passover Feast, until, when Christ came, those around Him began to realize the nature of His mission,

and, after His death, saw the full beauty of its meaning. Thus John in his gospel said, "A bone of Him shall not be broken," and later in the Revelation, "The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."

To us the Passover Feast is full of exquisite signification. Christ, the Lamb slain, by faith our food, our strength, the One on whom we rest ourselves and whose death gives us a foundation of peace and assurance is the mainstay of our lives. Like the Jews, this Passover, this sacrifice once offered for us, this food, comes to us as we are passing through the night of trial and sorrow. We too have our loins girt, for we are passing forward to another land. We too eat our sacrifice with bitter herbs, for we are not free from the taint of evil; the memory and habits of our past sins still embitters the joy of our communion with Christ. We too must stand, for this is not our rest, it is the hour of our trial and of our service to our King. It is a sacrifice as well as a Feast of rejoicings; the death of Christ upon the cross gives the pardon of our sins as well as the assurance that we may one day take part in the great Feast of the hereafter.

Assent of the People to the Sacrifice.

Moses having given the ordinances to the elders of Israel, and having charged them with the solemn duty of passing down from age to age to their children the signification of all that they were doing, entrusted them to carry out his directions. We read that the people bowed their heads and worshipped. The children of Israel had learnt even more than the Egyptians from the curse that had fallen upon the land. When Moses came back to Egypt the children of Israel were only weary of persecution, but now they had been taught to look forward, they had learnt something of the power of God, and in this, their hour of agony, they thankfully accepted the way of escape, and as a united nation obeyed and worshipped God. This was their first great lesson. They would hereafter learn far more of themselves at Sinai, they would understand the sinfulness of their hearts, and wonder that the destroying angel should

have passed over them. They would learn also from their disobedience in the wilderness still further knowledge of themselves, and still further wonder at the sign which had been given them. But for the moment, doubtless, only two thoughts were present to them:—intense thankfulness for the way of escape, and eagerness to depart to the promised land.

The Destruction of the First-born.

And then at midnight the destruction came, a disaster a thousand times heavier even than the days and nights of darkness which had preceded it, for mingled with the darkness was the horror of the shadow of death. Into the palace of Pharaoh as well as into the home of the humblest slave the angel of death passed and a first-born son died. A great cry arose, a cry of pain such as never before or since in history has entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. It is impossible for us to imagine such a wail of anguish, we can only judge something of what it must have been from its after effects. The whole nation rose with but one desire, but one thought, and that was to speed the Israelites upon their way. There was no longer any question as to who was the great God, who was the Supreme Power over all. The Egyptians knew surely, and not only the Egyptians but also the surrounding world, that God was God alone, just as the Israelites learnt again the same truth upon Mount Carmel after the sacrifice by the hand of Elijah. There was no longer any question of delay. The Israelites had only to ask for what they wanted and they could despoil the Egyptians at their will, that is to say, they could require back from them something of the wages which for hundreds of years had been kept back from them by fraud. But spoil the Egyptians as they would, a few jewels of gold could not repay them for the long years of unrequited service any more than the death of the first-born of Egypt could recompense them for the slaughter of their innocent children which one after another had been thrown into the river? There can be no requital made in this world for the injustice which we do to one another. All

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that can be done is in the sight of the whole world to stamp sin as sin, so that men may know how evil it is, and to vindicate God as King so that men may fear to offend before Him.

We notice that the first-born of all the sacred animals died as well as the first-born of man. This was not without reason. Egypt had worshipped the sacred bulls and other animals and given honour to them as to a god. When the first-born of these animals died together with all others, God showed that He and He alone was the God of the whole earth, and that all men and animals alike were His workmanship and subject to His will.

Departure of the Children of Israel.

The story of the actual journey out of Egypt has its full and sad significance. All who separate themselves and try to live apart from sin are followed by those who imitate them and want to share their fortune, but who do not want to share their severance from sin. Even as in later years many of Christ's hearers sought only loaves and fishes and were in no way moved by the truths He taught them, so at the outset of their national life the children of Israel were accompanied by a multitude whose sole motive was their terror at the judgment which had befallen Egypt. But as the Israelites went forth in all their haste one thing was not forgotten. The coffin containing the bones of Joseph, and probably having also the Patriarchal archives enshrined within it, was carried out of the land of Egypt. His word of calm assurance when he was dying had at last been fulfilled, though the nation had passed through the pangs of a death-throe such as he could never have anticipated, and Israel, the redeemed people of God, began their journey under the manifest protection of Him whom he had served. The visible presence of God which Moses had seen in the burning bush was before them on their journey a flame of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day.

LESSON XII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XII. 14-17.

THE CLOUD BY DAY, THE PILLAR OF FIRE BY NIGHT.

The Era of the Institution of the Passover.

The children of Israel had eaten the Feast of the Passover in haste and trembling. They were about to leave a country which had sheltered them for over four hundred years, and to which, despite the heavy bondage, they afterwards looked back with regret on account of its rich food and abundant produce. They were going forth to an unknown land with a long and perilous journey before them; and in addition to the dangers of the march, there was the wrath of the king, who if he could, would slaughter them without mercy. At such a time it would have been natural if they had thought of their flight and nothing else, and yet we find that this was the time which was chosen by God to give them a spiritual lesson which would mark an epoch in the history of their nation greater and even more lasting than their deliverance from Egypt. It seems strange to us that it was so, but we must remember that the history which is recorded in the book of Exodus is not so much that of the successful rising of an oppressed people against their ruler, as that of a nation which was being brought from spiritual death into spiritual life. The great lesson of the Atonement was given at a supreme national crisis, at what might be called the birth of

Israel as a free nation, a birth accompanied by terror and anguish all around, and yet full of future and of hope. The great Passover Feast in the stillness of the night revolutionized the world's history; it was the dawning of new life, of new hope, not only for the first-born of many nations, but for the many nations also. The book of Genesis describes how death fell upon all men as the inheritance of their common nature, the book of Exodus shows the dawn of light even in the midst of death. The first-born of Egypt had been slain, but at the same time a new scheme of redemption, the God-life to be given for the man-life was made manifest. This truth, Moses tells the children of Israel, is to be to them as they leave the land of Egypt "the frontlet between their eyes, the token upon their hands, the law in their mouths." In order to obey it, they made phylacteries containing this passage and the other three similar ones, that is to say they made small cases containing these texts, and wore them upon their foreheads and upon their hands, thus making them a literal frontlet to their eyes, a literal token upon their hands. If this command was intended literally, it was only in order that the spiritual meaning might be the more constantly in remembrance. This great institution of the Passover was to be to the Jews what the institution of the Lord's Supper in some of its aspects is to us. It was to keep ever in their minds the marvellous mercy of God, the sacrifice for sin. Wherever they went, whatever they were doing, they were to have a deep underlying consciousness that they were free because a life had been given for their life, and that therefore they could look with joy and hope upon the present as well as upon the future. This token also would be the mainspring of their activity. Their hands were henceforth free to work for themselves and for God, and were free agents, instead of being driven forward under the smart of the whips of the Egyptians. The law was to be in their mouths a law of thanksgiving and of praise because their lips were free and they could give forth the feeling of their hearts. If this was to be the abiding consciousness of the

Israelites as they passed from one yearly Passover to another, how much more ought it to be the case with us, who pass not from one Passover Feast to another, that is to say, not from one foreshadowed type, no matter how beautiful and clear, to another, but who can look back upon the Cross of Christ and know that His sacrifice has redeemed us from our sins. Our life should indeed be joyful because of our free outlook, our accepted service, as we make our journey onward towards the River of Death and into the land of our inheritance.

The Order March upon the Journey.

The Israelites had started out with their flocks and with their herds, together with whatever spoil they could gather from the Egyptians, and also as much of their own possessions as they could take with them. Their food, that is to say, their dough out of their kneading troughs, was bound up in cloths upon their shoulders. As they set out upon their journey three routes lay open before them. The first led towards the east, "the way of the land of the Philistines" (Ex. xiii. 17). The second lay across the desert, and probably was the road by which Jacob and Joseph had come down into Egypt. The drawback to this was that it lay across the desert, in which they would have no possible means of support. The third was the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea (Ex. xiii. 18), and this was the one which was finally chosen by Moses. The objection to the first road was that the Israelites were not in a condition to offer battle or to meet it, therefore God in mercy interposed and bade Moses take the way of the Red Sea, "Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war and they return to Egypt." God had read the heart of Pharaoh in his stubbornness and had read equally well the hearts of the Israelites in their weakness. He led them out by a way in which there would be no retreat and in which His strength would make a way for them. Thus they

went forward "harnessed," that is to say, five in a row, towards the Red Sea, and for the first time God's presence was visibly manifested before them in the way as they went.

The Pillar of Fire and the Pillar of Cloud.

Until this time, although God had spoken to individual men at critical epochs in their lives, and to Moses at critical epochs in the national life of the Israelites, He had not permitted His presence to be seen, whereas He now became, as they went forward, the ever-present guide and protector of the people. A great feeling of wonder, awe, and confidence, such as fell upon Jacob when he saw the ladder reaching from heaven to earth, came upon the whole nation. "So didst Thou get Thee a name as it is this day."—*Neh.* ix. 10, 12. They saw the cloud of His glory by day, the fiery pillar by night. They knew that they were encompassed by a Being of infinite power, mystery, glory, and holiness. This same visible abiding presence of God was their great strength and support, not only when wandering in the wilderness, but also when the light rested over the temple in Jerusalem. It was the absence of this visible presence which, later, made the children of Israel realize their sin, when it was darkened and removed from them for hundreds of years. This glorious light reappeared at Pentecost after the great Atonement upon Calvary had been made, when the Life had been given for all lives. Then to the joy of the Christian Church God's light once more visibly appeared upon earth, and in tongues of fire rested upon the heads of all the believers on the day of Pentecost, thus typifying that God's visible presence was again given as a guide and protection, and that the promise of Jesus was about to be fulfilled, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The visible light has been withdrawn, but, we know by faith, the presence which it typified still surrounds, follows, leads each individual servant of God. "If a man love Me he will keep My words and

My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." We believe that God's presence rests over and leads nations, as well as individuals, who fear, honour, and obey Him, and that He is infinitely nearer now than at the passage of the Red Sea, and that His written word and His Holy Spirit are the guide and the light of His people.

The Attack of the Egyptians upon Israel.

Although the hearts of the Israelites were uplifted by the visible presence of God, they were also downcast by their marching orders. They were told to turn and go forward into the region from which there would be no escape. They would be hemmed in on one side by the Salt Lake, on the other by the mountains and the Red Sea. Yet led by Moses they went forward even if with faltering steps. The reason given for the order only showed the danger of their position. They were deliberately to draw on the attack of the Egyptians, and thus apparently to involve themselves in hopeless overthrow. If they could not fight against the Philistines, what could they do against the flower of Pharaoh's army and against his chariots? The consequence of their march in this direction was what Moses had foretold. Pharaoh, with a general's eye, saw that at last the whole nation was in his power. He called together his army, and sending forth six hundred of his chariots, each containing two warriors fully armed, one holding the shield and the other driving, he ordered them to push in among the helpless crowd of men, women, children, and cattle, and wreak destruction and death on every side. We wonder at first why this attack had not been made sooner, for from the very outset the Israelites must have been entirely at the mercy of the Egyptian army; but we have to remember that Pharaoh and all the nation would be delayed for a time by the funeral ceremonies consequent upon the death of the first-born sons. Pharaoh's eldest son, if he was the son of Menephtah, would especially be mourned, not only by his father but by the whole nation, for we find records of his victories until his career was

stopped by sudden and unexplained death. These funeral obsequies over, the Egyptians overtook the Israelites only too quickly, just as they were encamped in an apparently hopeless position, the Sea in front, and Pharaoh and his hosts but a few bow shots behind.

LESSON XIII.

CHAPTER XII. (*Continued*).

"I WILL BE HONOURED UPON PHARAOH AND
UPON ALL HIS HOSTS."

It is easy to understand why Pharaoh wished to overtake the Israelites and send out his army against them. It is not equally easy to understand why God bade the children of Israel go by the Red Sea in order to tempt Pharaoh forward to his destruction. There is something very terrible in the thought of that great army being engulfed in one moment by the waters of the Red Sea, but if we look carefully we can see that there were two reasons for it. In the first place, the destruction of the army was necessary for the after protection of the Israelites. In the second place, it was a just and final punishment, and at the same time a warning to all who hereafter might, like Pharaoh, persist in wilful rebellion against God. Had the Israelites crossed the Red Sea in peace and safety and made their way forward into Canaan, they would, not only during their whole journey, but also when first settled in the land, have been in constant danger from the Egyptians. For, as we know from the monuments, Pharaoh was stopped in all his great undertakings in Egypt, such as the building of his treasure cities, and the working of his mines. It was almost certain, therefore, that if the Israelites had succeeded in crossing the wilderness and entering into the land of Canaan, he would have followed them there, and if he could not have fetched them back, would have at least wreaked a terrible vengeance.

But if, on the other hand, the flower of his army was destroyed, and the great power of the Israelites, or rather, the power of the God of the Israelites, was made known, not only throughout Egypt, but also throughout the then known world, a time of calm would be given sufficient to allow the Israelites to conquer the inhabitants of Canaan and to become masters of the land. And this, we find, is what actually did take place. The Egyptians for some years did not go beyond their own borders, that is to say there is no record of any attack made by them upon Israel.

A Lesson of Repentance.

Besides the judgment which fell upon Pharaoh's army, there was given not only to Pharaoh but to the whole world a great spiritual lesson. God had demanded from Pharaoh and the Egyptians the acknowledgment of His sovereignty, obedience to His will, and repentance for their rebellion. The consequence of the overthrow of the Egyptians was that God was "honoured upon Pharaoh" and upon all his host, and that the Egyptians knew that he was the Lord. The sovereignty of God was, therefore, established not only in the eyes of Pharaoh, but in those of the whole world. There is a further lesson which we can learn from it. The great question which faced Pharaoh, as formerly Joseph's brethren, was that of repentance. God called upon the Egyptians and as he had formerly called upon Joseph's brethren to cease from their evil ways, and to obey His command. We see working out in Pharaoh the ultimate result of determined disobedience, in Joseph's brethren that of true repentance; or, to put it in another way, we see in Pharaoh an instance of forced obedience which led only to deeper rebellion, in Joseph's brethren a true repentance which led to safety and salvation, and at last to a transformation of character. Joseph, doubtless, led by the Spirit of God, had brought his brethren into such a position that they had to choose between apparent destruction to themselves or a repetition of their former sin; that is to say, if they refused to give up Benjamin to the fate which hung over him, they would involve themselves in destruction together

with him, and would leave Jacob and their wives and families to possible destruction by famine, because they were no longer able to return and protect them or to bring them food from Egypt. On the other hand, if they deserted Benjamin they could purchase food and liberty for themselves and for their children, but in order to do so they must break their pledge to their father, and they must treat Benjamin somewhat in the same way in which they had before treated Joseph. Pharaoh was in a position in which, as blow after blow had fallen, he had loosed his hand just as little as he possibly could, and after each trial had put it back to the place where it had been before. After the last terrible blow, when his hand had apparently been loosed altogether, he had only watched until the final trial came when he had either to keep his word and lose the Israelites or to break his word and to attack and recover all that he had lost. Joseph's brethren showed a change of heart by daring all calamity rather than a repetition of their sin. This was true repentance, whereas Pharaoh chose to dare God's vengeance and renew his sin, and thus brought final judgment and overthrow upon himself.

The Effect of the Approach of the Egyptians upon the Children of Israel.

The Israelites, despite the strangeness of the line of march which they were following, had gone bravely forward until they turned their eyes away from the pillar of cloud that was leading them, and looked back upon the Egyptians marching down in hot haste upon them. They seem to have given a cry of agony and of prayer to God, and then to have turned in their rage upon Moses and overwhelmed him with reproaches. They seem to have forgotten the joy with which they had accepted the offer of salvation in Egypt, when they had bowed the head and worshipped. Now they cried out that it was all the fault of Moses. Their prayer had been to be left alone in Egypt. When we consider the circumstances we do not wonder that the Israelites were overwhelmed, and cried out in this their hour of extreme danger ; but at the same time, we see the

folly of their murmuring and reproach. This was the time they should have rallied round Moses, rather than have cast reproaches upon him. If they were in extremity, how much more so was he, on whom the whole responsibility rested? If their danger was critical, even for their own sakes it was the time to support their leader, not to overwhelm him. Instead of weakening his arm they should have stood by him in the hope that even, at this eleventh hour, some way of escape might be found.

The greatness of Moses is shown in his reply. He takes no notice of all that has been said personally against him. Instead of justifying himself, or showing them their folly, he sympathizes with their trouble, understands and relieves them; then out of his own great strength he inspires strength into the thousands of despairing hearts before him. He turns their eyes away from the Egyptians and points them forward to God and to His salvation.

The glittering chariots of the Egyptians each moment are bearing down upon them, but the hosts of Heaven are overshadowing the Israelites. God shall fight for them, they shall hold their peace, and the host of the Egyptians which they have seen to-day they shall see again no more for ever. The inspiring words are urgent, for as Moses turns apparently to cast himself in prayer, the command comes from God not even to stay for prayer, but to speak to the children of Israel that they go forward, for the whole matter is in the hands of God. The sea before, as well as the army of the Egyptians behind, are under His control, and both alike will obey His command.

The Night of the Passage of the Red Sea.

When this the final point had been reached, God gave another token of His protection. The angel of His presence, which had been leading the hosts of the Israelites, moved backwards and stood behind them, so that it was a guard between them and the Egyptians. The whole scene now becomes so wonderful, and so vivid that we can almost see it pass before us.

When we think of the passage being, as it probably was,

from two to three miles broad, we see how the Egyptians would gradually grope their way down into the midst of it, and be drawn on without realizing where they were until in the first light of the morning watch, the pillar of fire, which had shed an illumination over the path of the Israelites, was turned with the fierceness of God's anger upon the Egyptians. Then there fell upon the host of Egypt something of that awful sinking of heart, that death-like despair and terror which turned the heart of Nabal into stone, and which at different times fell upon the Canaanites, as described in the book of Joshua, that death-like despair which even here, before death, sometimes falls like a foretaste of hell upon those who are wilfully in rebellion against God.

The sandy bed of the river, which had been a path of safety to the Israelites, proved one of destruction to the heavy chariots of the Egyptians. With a blaze of light from the pillar of fire dazzling and dismaying both them and their horses, they lost all control over their chariots, and drove hither and thither in wild confusion. To add to their distress their chariot wheels became imbedded in the sand, so that they "drave heavily." They had no longer any thought of pursuit; one idea, and one only, possessed them, and that was to make their escape at any cost whatever. Too late they realized their sin, and confessed that it was the God whom they had resisted who had brought destruction upon them. They acknowledged the sovereignty of God, but only just as the vast walls of water on either side fell at the movement of Moses' rod, and overwhelmed them in the sea.

There is something very terrible in the picture of that vast agonized host struggling to drive hither and thither with confused cries, and thunderings of horses, and of chariots, and one moment later the same scene with the awful silence of death, the waters rolling over the chariot host. What a lesson for the Israelites! The Egyptians at the last moment had believed and acknowledged God. The Israelites, standing on the other side, believed in God also, not only as God, but as their personal Saviour. They knew that it was through His hand they were ransomed, redeemed, and in safety on

the other side. And whilst they believed in Him they recognized in His servant, Moses, their leader, he who, under God, had brought them out in safety.

The picture of the cloud standing between the Israelites and the Egyptians, giving light and guidance to the one and casting darkness and despair upon the other, is a picture not only for that time, but for all time of what the truth of God has been and will be, according to whether men obey God or set themselves in opposition to His will. That which is a guidance to the one becomes darkness and terror to the other. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious, but unto them which be disobedient . . . a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence."

LESSON XIV.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XV.

THE SONG OF MOSES.

A Memorable Night in Jewish History.

On the night of the Passover the Jewish nation was redeemed to God; on the night of the passage of the Red Sea it was "baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." These two nights stand out forever in Christian as well as in Jewish history; the one reminds us of a darkness which fell over all the land at mid-day, a darkness far more awful than that of night, for it was the gathering of a sin cloud which from the time of the creation until the end of the world had risen and separated man from God. This cloud Christ gathered upon Himself, and by doing so turned night gradually into day. The other, the passage of the Red Sea, reminds us of the night in which Christ broke the bars of death and opened the gates of everlasting life.

When Moses and the children of Israel stood upon the shores of the Red Sea, and in the early morning light watched the waters rolling down their course, glittering in the sunshine, and covering the awful overthrow beneath them, it must have seemed impossible to believe that the events of the last night were true, to realize that their enemy was overthrown, his power broken, that from henceforth they were free to move forward in safety to the new land which had been promised to them. It was no wonder that the sudden reversion

of feeling found expression in an outburst of praise to God.

There are times when the soul is stirred to its inmost depth and can find expression in song alone. This great victory brought forth the first national song which has been recorded. For the first time we are told that men's lips broke out in one united song of thanksgiving to God, just as when they had heard of the promised deliverance from Egypt they had bowed their head and worshipped in one common joy. But this joy was greater. It was one of sight as well as of faith. They had then believed the promises of God; now they believed because they saw those promises fulfilled.

The first recorded song of man upon earth brings to mind the first recorded song of the angel host when "suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the Heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'"

The theme of the great song of angels and of men in both cases was the same, that is to say, the glory of salvation.

He hath Triumphed Gloriously.

The Song is in antiphon, in two parts. The Hebrew is archaic in form, and it contains in the original many ancient words as well as words of Egyptian derivation. It is thought by Dean Stanley that Moses and the sons of Israel met Miriam at the head of a long train of Israelitish women coming forth with the sounding timbrels and religious dances which they had played in Egypt to greet the triumphant host.

Their song stands as the song of triumphant rejoicing for the overthrow of God's enemies. Like the 46th Psalm it has a ring of absolute confidence in God and God alone. The name of Moses never appears in the Song. At this, the very outset of their national life, they acknowledge that the victory which they have gained has come from God and God only. In later Jewish history God's servants realized that the divine hosts encamped around the armies

of Israel, as for instance when Joshua met the angel of God, who said, "as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." The servant of Elisha beheld the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire. And here at their first national victory God and God only is their strength and their salvation. The Lord Jehovah has arisen and in the greatness of His excellency has overthrown His enemies. He stands on one side, the enemy on the other. They are filled with fear and dread. The enemy said "my hand shall destroy them," but "Thou didst blow with Thy wind, they sank as lead." It is not only present victory, it is future also, for "the people shall hear and be afraid." "Fear and dread shall fall upon them." "They shall be as still as a stone till thy people pass over," till they "are planted in the mountain of their inheritance," the place which "Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in."

The Song is full of confident hope, for Israel saw nothing but safety and a triumphant entrance into the land of their inheritance, and doubtless but for their sin it might have been so. It was their murmuring and disobedience which hindered the work of God, and made their pathway one of difficulty and trial instead of one of glory and of light. Still, at the last their anticipation was realized. God did bring them into the land of Canaan, and His hand did establish a sanctuary for them. But even this too was only for a time; it was only a foretaste of the hereafter. Their anticipation will not be fully realised until at last they are gathered into the great Sanctuary, the Presence of God, and God reigns among them for ever and ever.

This final gathering in was seen in a vision by St. John, and is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation. He sees there a sea of glass, mingled with fire, like the waters of the Red Sea, with the light which troubled the Egyptians shining upon it. God's redeemed stand in safety before Him, victorious over the powers of evil, and there is a stillness in Heaven whilst the seven angels wait before they go forth to overwhelm the powers of evil, and to pour down the wrath of God upon all who are in rebellion against Him. During this pause, and just before

the angels are loosed from the presence of God, just as in the moment before the sea came down to overwhelm the Egyptians, St. John hears a song of triumph sung, the song of Moses intermingled with the song of the Lamb.

The theme in Heaven is the same as the theme upon earth—the perfect justice and glory of God, the salvation and safety of His servants, only united with the great thanksgiving of the Old Testament dispensation comes the song of the Lamb, the song of Him who is the New Testament of the world. United in that song he hears the voices of all nations, those of the former times as well as those of the latter, when He who is the King of the nations shall have once again subdued all nations under His feet.

It is well to notice, however, that both in the Song of the Lamb and in the Song of Moses, the joy of redemption is mingled with the joy at the overthrow of evil. God is a God of love, but He is a God whose face is turned against evil. Sin must be overcome and flee away from before the face of God in the last day as well as in the time of Moses. Side by side with the deep river of the love of God runs also the deep river of the wrath of God against sin.

It is a glorious thought that from the time of Moses until the time of the final triumph in Heaven, a song of thanksgiving for God's salvation, for the triumph of right over wrong, has been caught up and passed down from lip to lip by each successive generation. Into this song when Christ was born the glorious voices of the multitude of the Heavenly host were for a few moments mingled with the voices of earth. After He ascended into Heaven a song of praise, century after century, has been caught up from land to land, from voice to voice, until to-day it is sung in almost every language, by every race and people, and will be sung until the song of earth is forever blended in unison with the eternal song of Heaven.

LESSON XV.

EXODUS, CHAPTERS XV. 20, XVI. AND XVII.

THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.

The Leadership of Moses, Miriam, and Aaron.

The children of Israel were safe and triumphant upon the banks of the Red Sea with a joy far exceeding that with which they had first heard that God would visit and deliver them. But they did not realize how long a passage of trial and difficulty lay before them, and what a heavy task of responsibility would be cast upon their leaders.

In the verses which describe the national thanksgiving we find the names of Moses and Aaron inscribed as leaders of the men, and that of Miriam as the leader of the women. She is described as a prophetess, the sister of Aaron; and as we read of her we wonder what part she and Aaron had played among the children of Israel during the long years of Moses' exile in the wilderness. Had they the two leaders retained in their hearts the knowledge and the fear of God, the hope that Moses would one day return, and that God would look upon their misery and bring him back to be a leader among them? Had they helped to keep alive this hope among the Israelites?

Miriam must have felt as keenly the oppression of the women as Moses had felt the oppression of the men. As a young girl she had shown quickness and ability in the answer which she had given to the daughter of Pharaoh. As her brothers grew up she had probably helped to

influence and mould their characters and to train them. We find in after years that both she and Aaron found it hard to stand on one side and to realize that a revelation and power could be given to Moses far transcending any that could be given to them, and that because of his faithfulness he could hear the voice of God and understand His will. Probably Miriam was, like Moses, naturally a leader. She clearly occupied at this time a prominent place among the women of Israel, and God, as we see in this song, was speaking through her. She was acknowledged as a prophetess, and she co-operated with Moses and with Aaron in the great task that lay before them, and led Israel at a time when able leaders were greatly needed. Never was there a more helpless crowd of men, women, and children; helpless in themselves because they were only just reclaimed from slavery, helpless in the face of what lay before them—a journey through a wilderness, an attack upon a country possessed by enemies with armies and cities walled up to Heaven, and hopeful only because God had showed Himself to be their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, and, through Moses, Aaron, and Miriam had revealed Himself as their Leader and their King.

The Training which God gave the Israelites.

A nation may be born in a night, but it cannot grow up to manhood in a night; it must pass through temptation, and learn by failure as well as by success the great lessons which form the foundation of national life.

The next two chapters describe how Israel learned something of these first national lessons, and the form of these lessons is the counterpart of that which had been experienced by the Egyptians. When the Israelites were in the land of Egypt they had seen God's hand of judgment rather than His hand of mercy. The various blessings of the Egyptians had been taken from them and turned into a curse because they had been disobedient to the will of God and had refused to obey His voice. The Israelites in the wilderness now experienced that the same hand of

God instead of taking any blessing from them, and as a punishment turning it into a curse, transformed each curse and trouble as it came to them into a blessing, and thus showed that the nations who feared God would find all things work together for their good.

The Israelites had seen the waters of the Nile turned into blood; they now see the waters of Marah turned from bitter to sweet. They had seen the hail destroy the flax and barley of Egypt, and the locusts eat the substance of what was left; they now receive from God a harvest of daily food, which they had not sown and for which they had not laboured. The Egyptians were destroyed by the Red Sea because God was fighting against them; the Israelites, a hopeless crowd of slaves, overthrow the army of the Amalekites because God is on their side.

The Spiritual Teaching Foreshadowed in these Events.

Each event as it passes contains a spiritual lesson. St. Paul in his Epistles constantly refers to them, and illuminates them with New Testament teaching, and tells us that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The Passage Through the Desert.

After leaving the Red Sea, Moses brought the children of Israel into the wilderness of Shur. He must have felt it strange as leader of the children of Israel to pass through that land in which as an exile and alone he had wandered with his flock for forty years, and he must have seen what at that time was dark to him, that is to say, the purpose which God was working out in him when the land of Egypt was closed to him, and he was forced to flee into the wilderness. There was first his spiritual training. If he had not in the long hours of solitary communion with God learnt to approach Him, how could he now have leant upon Him? how could he have spoken to Him face to face as a man speaketh to his

friend? There had also been a second preparation for his afterwork. If he had not pastured his flock in the desert, how could he have been so thoroughly acquainted with the whole land, so conversant with its springs, its pasture grounds, and its great rocks of shelter?

We must not think of the wilderness as one vast sandy desert. The first district traversed by the children of Israel was sandy and uninhabited, but further on it was not an uninhabited waste. Scientists tell us that in former days much of this district could almost be called fertile land. There were colonies of Egyptian miners, working in copper, iron, and turquoise mines. There were travellers passing to and fro, from whom, as we see in Deut. ii. 6, food and water could be purchased, and the Israelites had left the land of Egypt with much spoil which they had taken from the Egyptians, so that they could sometimes purchase according to their need. Later on, when they settled for long periods of time at any one place, they would be able like the modern Bedouins to plant and sow for themselves.

The Waters of Marah.

At Marah, which is now generally considered to be the same as the modern Hawarah, with its springs of water and trees, we can imagine the joy of the children of Israel at the prospect of reaching their first place of shelter and of refreshment. Utterly unused to long marches, the water which they had brought with them exhausted, and suffering from the torments of thirst, what was their disappointment at finding that then, as now, the water was so embittered with nitre that it was impossible to drink it. One cannot help sympathizing with them in their intense anguish and disappointment. The fault lay not in the cry for water, but in the way in which the cry was made, in their murmurings against Moses.

To the cry for help God ever responded, just as when Christ was upon earth He ever turned to any cry of sorrow or of pain. What Israel needed was to be taught to lean on God, and to turn to Him in their trouble, to have the same

spirit towards God, the same spirit of a little child which they saw in their leader Moses. When Moses was in distress or in difficulty he turned to God as naturally as a child turns to its father, with a confident expectation that an answer of help would be given. To the children of Israel each time of need was, instead of this, a time of inward rebellion, and of bitter anger, ostensibly directed against Moses, but really against God.

If we did not know something of the workings of our own hearts, this constant murmuring of the children of Israel would seem impossible to us, and beyond belief. At Moses' prayer a miracle of healing was granted. A tree was cast into the water, and the water became sweet. Thus at the very outset of their journey an object-lesson was given to the Israelites of what their life might be and should be. Trials would and must come, and each trial as it came would be bitter, but by the hand of God it could be turned into a token of His daily love and care for them.

We are reminded in the first miracle in the wilderness of Christ's first miracle in Cana of Galilee. Moses cut down a tree and cast it into the water in order to make it sweet. Christ by a word turned the water into wine. The revelation given by God through Moses was that God could turn the bitter of the then world into sweet, whereas the revelation which Christ came to give was more even than this, for Christ could turn the deliverance which Moses had effected into the wine of spiritual deliverance of joy and of thanksgiving.

Then came the first teaching of God to the Israelites. We wonder why there was no reproof contained in it. Instead of reproof we find a promise that if they will walk in His commandments they will be free from those diseases which owing to their self-indulgence were so common among the Egyptians. Dean Chadwick points out that despite the backslidings of the children of Israel to this day this promise has been fulfilled, and the Jews have been kept comparatively free from diseases, and he quotes the following passage from the *Journal of the Victoria Institute* in support of this: "They also certainly do enjoy immunity from the ravages of

cholera, fever, and smallpox in a remarkable degree. Their blood seems to be in a different condition from that of other people. . . . They seem less receptive of disease caused by blood poisoning than others."

Some writers see in the casting of the tree into the water a foreshadowing of the Cross of Christ, and of the salvation which it has brought into the world.

The Israelites passed on from Marah to Elim, and we can think of the joy with which at last they encamped beside its abundant water, and rejoiced in the coolness and shadow of its palm trees. Elim stands in Christian phraseology as the type of a resting-place, a time of quiet and of refreshment. "An Elim with its coolness, its fountains, and its shades."

LESSON XVI.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XVI.

Can God Provide a Table in the Wilderness?

However grateful the rest of Elim might be, the children of Israel must arise and go forward, and as they went a new and apparently insurmountable difficulty began to present itself before them. It had been one thing to stand and watch the smooth waters of the Red Sea flow peacefully over what a few moments before had been a mighty army about to overtake and wreak vengeance upon a helpless host. In the sunshine of that morning their terror had been turned into confidence and joy; the way before them seemed to be as nothing in the certainty of their hope that they would soon be brought in, they would soon be planted in the mountain of their inheritance. It was another thing as they made their weary way from Elim and went forward under the heat and burden of the day with a consciousness that the provisions which they carried with them could only suffice them for a short time longer, and that although their cattle might find pasture from place to place in the wilderness, they themselves and their little ones, as far as they could see, must ere long perish with hunger. It was true that they knew that God had turned the bitter water into sweet, but that seemed a small matter in comparison with the need now pressing upon them. It was not strange that they murmured, for murmurs at much slighter provocation arise daily to our lips. What was strange was that there was no appeal for help, only a fierce indictment of Moses and of Aaron. They declared that they would rather have

died in Egypt by the hand of the destroying angel, if only death could have come to them in the midst of feasting and of physical enjoyment, and they charged Moses with a deliberate cruelty towards them, a cruelty even more deliberate than that which they believed underlay the judgments which God had let fall upon the Egyptians. They had been brought out into the wilderness in order that they might be killed by the more painful death of hunger.

The Gift of Quails and of Manna.

The reply given by God to their complaint is one of infinite goodness, understanding, and magnanimity. He passes over their sinful murmurings, their ingratitude, their failure to understand His purpose. They have thought of God according to their own nature, not according to His dealings with them, but He hears and answers their distress. He looks not upon what their prayer had been, but upon what it should have been. He grants what they ought to have asked, and even further. Day by day bread will be given to them, and will continue to come to them directly from the hand of God. By that daily provision, and by the presence of the cloud resting upon them and guiding them, they will be conscious of the presence of God. The reason for the daily gift is also given. It is to strengthen their faith and to lead them day by day to further faith and trust, and to give them the opportunity of seeing whether they will be obedient to the law of God or no.

A further promise is given. The craving for flesh will be satisfied by the quails which a strong wind will bring around their camp, but at the same time this promise is accompanied by two distinct warnings. They are told first, that whilst God has seen their need, and provided for it, He has also heard their murmurings. Secondly, that although their murmurings are against Moses, God has seen what the true nature of their rebellion is, and, therefore, before either the gift of the manna or of the quails will be given, they are to be gathered together into the presence of God. Even whilst Moses and Aaron were speaking the vision which they foretold was vouchsafed. All the congregation must have been con-

science-stricken; first, at the revelation of the sin within their hearts; secondly, at the sight of the majesty and glory of God. There had been a national murmuring, there was now a national humiliation. Every man from that day forth knew that whatever he said and did was manifest in the eyes of the God with whom he had to do. If Isaiah said: "Woe is me, for I am unclean," what must each Israelite have felt as he stood convicted of sin in the presence of this awful vision?

"His Dews Drop Mutely on the Hill."

The gift of quails was granted, and in the silence of the night the dews descended, and in the morning as the sun arose there was found upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost upon the ground. With rejoicing, but also with awe, the children of Israel must have gone forth to gather up the food which was so sorely needed. Every household gathered according to their need; and found that they had as much, but no more, than they required. The question they asked was, would this gift be continued daily according to God's promise, or would it cease? The gift of quails had been given, they had been brought up by the evening wind, but they had been given once only. Would God really rain bread from heaven daily upon His people, or would He, having satisfied their present need, do no more? Would it not be wise to gather up as much as possible, or, at any rate, although each man had only what was sufficient for the day's need, would it not be better to eat as little as possible and to save some, lest God's promise should fail upon the morrow? Despite the distinct direction given by Moses that nothing was to be left until the morning, some of the Israelites preferred to trust their own prudence rather than the promise of God, and were punished accordingly, for the manna bred worms and stank, and Moses was wroth with them.

On the sixth day each man gathered twice as much as on the other days, and in their wonder they came to Moses and told him. Once again they were made

to feel how immediately God's love was watching over and providing for them. They might have been tempted, had the manna fallen daily, to become accustomed to it, to think that it was some natural phenomenon of the wilderness, but when there was an intermission in the gift, when on the eve of the Sabbath twice as much was gathered as usual, each Israelite knew that the manna came from the loving hand of God. He would feel, therefore, that just as the deliverance from Egypt was marked out by the great lesson of the Atonement, the gift of the manna as daily food was marked out by a great spiritual lesson also. In the hush and silence of the Sabbath morn a space was given in which instead of the daily gathering of food, Moses and the Israelites might look up to God and thank Him for that gift, and recognize that this space was set apart for heavenly thought and communion with Him. After what we have seen of the way in which the Israelites walked by sight and not by faith, it is not wonderful to read that on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather manna but found none, and that this want of faith was recognized by God as arising from the rebellion of their hearts. They refused to keep His commandments and His laws. Once again in infinite mercy and in love those laws were repeated and the reason given for their observance, and from that time forward the people rested on the seventh day. This is the first clear account which we have of the Sabbath as a national observance, and it is closely united with the giving of spiritual food.

"And Man did Eat Angel's Food." "I am the Bread which came down from Heaven."

Many spiritual lessons are directly connected with the giving of the manna. The Israelites learned from it how as a nation God was training them to personal dependence and to a personal knowledge of His presence, love, and care. It is also evident that this early training would strengthen them in obedience, faith, and industry, and would prepare them also for further teaching as to the observance of the Sabbath. For us there are many and deep lessons involved

in it. It shows us that the institution of the Sabbath was given before the command on Mount Sinai, it points directly to Christ, the Bread of Life. Christ has taught us to pray for our daily bread, our bodily food, and also for our spiritual food. Our bodily food, after all, comes as directly from the hand of God as did the manna in the wilderness. God sends the seed-time and harvest, the cold and heat. The grain of corn, whilst it apparently rots, yet having the germ of life within it, grows and brings forth the harvest. We cannot explain the working of God's laws in the grain of corn any more than we can explain how the manna was given daily to the Israelites. After all, God's great family all over the world is fed and nourished as certainly by His care, although not so visibly, as the children of Israel. As to our spiritual food, we day by day depend for strength from God and turn to seek it as the Israelites sought the manna. We cannot keep our strength from day to day. Each day's prayer and communion with God gives to each individual soul the Bread of Life.

The promise given to the Church of Pergamos, by which she could withstand the mystery of evil described as Satan's seat or throne, was that God would give to her to eat of the hidden manna.

"Your Abundance for their Want."

There is another thought connected with "He that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gathered little had no lack." It is found in 2 Cor. viii. 15, where St. Paul says the Corinthians held the wealth which God had given them in trust for those who were poorer than themselves. The men of Corinth had been given abundance, and they were stewards of this abundance in order that they might have the joy of ministering to the needs of others, that they might exercise the same spirit which Jesus had shown, that they might become poor in order that others might be rich.

There are two distinctive features which mark out this miracle as different from all others in the Old Testament. In the first place, in all other miracles we find some natural

cause intermingled with the supernatural, that is to say, just as Christ took the loaves and fishes and multiplied them, so we find the widow's pot of oil increased, but in this one exception there is no natural element at all. Heavenly food, distinct and apart from anything on earth, is given, and the same food given to all. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat." In the second place, this miracle was especially marked out by God for remembrance throughout Old Testament times. A pot of manna was to be kept in the ark, in the Holy of Holies, so that when the Israelites were in a settled land of their own, this miracle of the daily food might be present in their thoughts whenever they came up into the temple or into the tabernacle. "The ark of the covenant, wherein was the golden pot that had manna."

The manna of the wilderness.

The manna (Hebrew, "What is it?") was a name afterwards given to a juice which exudes from a plant, the tamarisk, which grows in some abundance in the desert, and gives forth a substance akin to manna whenever it has been pricked by an insect. It is a greyish yellow, and is boiled down by the Arabs and used as a kind of honey with bread, but is quite distinct from the manna which was given in the wilderness. In the first place, the whole quantity produced in a single year does not usually exceed seven hundred pounds. It grows on a tree, whereas the manna in the book of Exodus was found wherever the Israelites went upon the surface of the wilderness. This natural manna cannot be ground, baked, or used for food in the way the Israelites prepared it for the Sabbath day. There is also another kind of manna which exudes in small quantities from the flowering ash, but it is quite distinct from the manna of the Israelites.

LESSON XVII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XVII.

THE VICTORY OVER AMALEK.

The Journey to Rephidim.

The children of Israel then left the sandy district and entered upon the mountainous and fertile ranges between Rephidim and Sinai. Their course has been traced by travellers, and they point to what they believe are the great rocks of Rephidim. As the Israelites drew near they welcomed "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." But they could not rest, they were suffering from thirst, and again gave way to unbelief. They might have known that the God who had given them daily food would, in their hour of need, have given them water also had they but asked Him. Instead, they chided Moses, and brought the same charge against him which they had brought in their former hour of need. Their cry was heard, and the water gushed out from the rock; but their sin left a mark of remembrance, and they were warned that God's anger had arisen against them, so that they might have been destroyed.

The place is given two names, one, "Temptation," marking the beginning of sin, the other, "Strife," marking the terrible height to which sin had arisen, because whilst eating the divine bread, they had questioned His presence among them, and striven with God.

The smitten rock has always been a type of God's mercy through Christ. "That Rock was Christ." "One of the

soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee ;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

"That which Amalek did to Israel."

Hardly had they rested and refreshed themselves when another danger came upon them. The Amalekites, the descendants of Esau, had gathered in the valley beneath, where plentiful springs and vegetation abounded, and they came up and attacked the Israelites, who had done nothing either to provoke or to injure them. The Amalekites stand marked out in Old Testament history as the first nation which warred against Israel. They must have heard of God's marvellous presence, and of the destruction which had fallen upon Egypt; and they probably dreaded their presence in the wilderness, thinking that they would overrun the districts which they had wandered over as if they were their own. They probably thought that their best chance of defeating the people would be to attack them when they were faint and discouraged because of the way, and that if they could overcome them they might overcome the mysterious God also whose wrath had fallen upon Egypt and upon them, and if victorious they would once more have this fertile part of the wilderness in undisturbed possession. We find from Deuteronomy that the Amalekites had already met Israel by the way, had smitten the hindmost of them, even all that were feeble, faint, and weary (Deuteronomy xxv. 18). Hence there was enmity between the Israelites and the Amalekites, which lasted until the remembrance of Amalek was blotted out from under heaven.

The Battle of Rephidim.

This was the first battle which took place between the Israelites and any of the surrounding nations. Humanly

speaking the Israelites were powerless against their enemies. They were untrained for warfare, weary, and encumbered by women, children, and cattle, whereas the Amalekites were used to warfare, their hand being against every man's. To the Israelites the battle was of great moment, not only in itself, but also as a precedent for all future warfare; if they were victorious, then they could face all future conflicts because they could rely on the same strength for victory.

Preparations for the Battle.

Moses was at this time eighty years of age and Joshua forty. The latter must have already marked himself out as a leader by his faith and courage, for Moses bade him take the command and organization of the army whilst he went to the top of the hill and with the rod of God in his hand, called down power and help from on high. Moses shows his greatness in this command to Joshua. He does not choose the post of honour and glory for himself. Joshua will stand out as the leader both in the eyes of Israel and of Amalek. He chooses the younger man, the man best fitted to lead the army to the fight, thus rightly estimating both his own power and that of Joshua, and putting the safety of God's people above his own glory and honour. In another respect he shows his perfect faith. If the spirit of what the Israelites had chanted in the psalm of Moses was true, then it was the right hand of God which had dashed in pieces their enemies, and therefore as the place of intercessor between God and Israel was the more important, he would thus bring surer success than by being commander of the army. And so Moses had the strength and faith to leave the active fight and to stand upon the top of the hill with the rod uplifted in his hand. Again Moses showed a wise judgment and an understanding of the right relations between prayer and work. In the crossing of the Red Sea the Israelites had stood still whilst the waters engulfed their enemies, but in future conflicts of all kinds they were to take their part and to fight. It was true the power of God would be behind them, but they must also go forward. That he had done wisely was shown by the event. When Moses

held up his hand Israel prevailed, but when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. Then Aaron and Hur stood beside him and stayed his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other, so that his hands were steady until the going down of the sun, and thus Joshua discomfited Amalek. The whole story is full of practical teaching. We see what the strength of united prayer is. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by My Father." In Moses as mediator, Aaron as priest, and Joshua as a prince, many see a type of Christ, our High Priest, Mediator and King, uniting all three offices in His own person, and interceding for us.

A Memorial of this Battle to be Written in a Book.

This battle marked an epoch in the history of the children of Israel, and stood out as a memorial to all future ages. Therefore God commanded that it should never be forgotten, and gave the following directions so that the memory of it should be preserved.

First, the memorial of it was to be written in the book. This seems to point towards the fact, that the great deeds which God was working for Israel were being commemorated by Moses, and were being committed to writing from this time forward as they took place.¹

Secondly, it was to be rehearsed from time to time in the ears of Joshua, so that the victory might be an inspiration to his courage, and so that the means by which it had been effected might be a guide to him in the conquest of Canaan. Joshua was marked out as the man who was to be the leader in the conquest of the Promised Land. His task would be second in difficulty only to that of Moses. Many conquests, apparently as hopeless as that of the battle of Rephidim, would be before him, such as the overthrow of Jericho and the battle of the five kings. As Amalek was the first nation to attack God's people, so the victory was the first fruits of the conflicts by which Canaan would be subdued.

¹ Sayce says it would have been little short of a miracle if Moses had not been a scribe.

Thirdly, Moses set up an altar of remembrance, similar to that which Jacob set up after the vision of Bethel. This altar was to be called Jehovah-nissi, the Lord my banner, for God had said, "Because the hand of Amalek *is against the throne of God*, therefore the Lord will war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Israel, it is said, was led forward by some glittering sign set upon a pole which was carried in the forefront of the attack. But their trust was not to rest upon any banner, nor upon the rod of Moses. Their rallying cry was to be "The Lord is my standard," the unseen God, the centre of their conflict, their rallying-place and strength. It is a glorious thought that God is our Commander and our Leader, and that His war will be constant against the powers of evil until they are destroyed for ever.

We are fighting a battle against the forces of evil apparently as hopeless as that of the Israelites against Amalek. Our forces are in themselves as scattered, as feeble, and as unorganized as those of the Israelites. We have to spread the light of the Gospel in the dark places of our own land and heathendom throughout the world. We should do well to keep in our memory this account of the battle of Amalek, to understand that for us also the victory is assured if we combine the generalship of Joshua with the mediation and the prayers of Moses. It is because of united work and prayers that we see victory already prevailing. The idols of China, Japan, and India are bowing down and losing their power, and God's servants are called upon to go forward in faith and prayer. Those who can fight and be leaders must go forward like Joshua; those who can prevail and have power with God must be strong in prayer like Moses.

LESSON XVIII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XVIII.

JETHRO AND MOSES.

A Priest of Midian.

This chapter is one of peculiar interest, because in it we get not only a glimpse of the personal life of Moses, but also an account of one of the great men of early days.

Jethro, the priest of Midian, steps forward out of the dim mist of the heathen world. From his words and character we see that in these earliest times there were, outside the children of Israel, certain men who had knowledge of the true God and respect for His laws. Melchizedek, Job, and Jethro have a grandeur of proportion, a simplicity of faith, and a willingness of approach to God. They have a grandeur of proportion similar to that of Abraham and of Moses. Jethro, like Melchizedek, was priest as well as king. There must have come down to him the traditions of that first knowledge of God and of God's great dealings with man as a whole, but his knowledge was rather that of a great God far off from men, who dealt with them in the past, than of a God such as Jehovah had shown Himself to be to Moses, an ever-living present help and power.

In this chapter we see how readily the soul of Jethro responded to the revelation which God had given to Moses. He passes at once from a far-away knowledge of God to a living trust and dependence upon Him. In

his own character also he is full of interest. He is one of the world's great men who rises beyond himself and his own personal interests, and who sees what are the great issues at stake, what are the great questions, what is the right attitude of man to man, and of man to God. He is marked out as one of the heroes of the Old Testament history, by his ready grasp of truth, his shrewdness, his quiet power of observation, his judgment, and his wise, God-given counsel. Moreover, in some respects he may be called the first-fruits of the Gentiles—the first man who is recorded as entering into sacrifice with the chosen people of Israel. Melchizedek has a dim majesty that lifts him above the sphere of men. Job acknowledges the justice and goodness of God; but Jethro, whether he understood the full import of what he was doing or not, yet by sacrifice looked forward to the Atonement, the life given for a life, and therefore, even though afar off, placed himself beneath the shadow of the Cross. It seems a far step from the Jethro to whom Moses either could not or did not unfold the reason for his going into Egypt to the Jethro who breaks the bread of thanksgiving with the elders of Israel.

The Return of Zipporah to Moses.

In the song of Moses it had been said "the people shall hear and be afraid," and among those to whom the account of the overthrow of the Egyptians and the miracles which had been wrought in the land of Egypt came was Jethro, the father-in-law as he is called, or as is more generally thought, the brother-in-law of Moses. Report after report of the wonders in Egypt reached Jethro in the wilderness. How greatly his spirit would be moved by them, how deeply he would ponder over and consider them!

They must have come with a mingled bitterness and joy to Zipporah, for she might have been beside Moses witnessing the wonder of God's working, supporting and helping her husband during the greatest crises of his life-work; whereas, on account of her poverty of spirit, her

inability to understand the journey of Moses and his great aims, as her presence would only have hindered the work, she had been allowed to return home. Her unwillingness and want of faith had been specially shown in her refusal to allow her child to be circumcised; and thus she had lost her chance in life, the work had been done without her, and she who, if she had been a woman of great and noble spirit like Miriam, might have done so much to help the Israelites, had lost the opportunity of taking part in the greatest events of Old Testament history. Now when all was over, at the bidding of her father-in-law she returns to share in the result of the work in which she had so far failed to play her part.

Her character is disappointing in all that we know of it. Her name only occurs two or three times. She failed at a crisis, later on she was a cause of difficulty, and on her account the deep bonds of love and intercommunion between Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, were for a time severed. How far she was responsible for this last calamity we do not know. It is possible that as the punishment fell upon Miriam her fault was greater than that of Zipporah. Still, as the name of Zipporah passes across the history of the Exodus, the shadow which she casts is one of disappointment and of uneasiness, and yet she was Moses' chosen wife and helper. Thus he would, now that the crisis was past, welcome her return together with that of her two sons. The name of each son was stamped with the record of the dark days which he had passed in the land of Midian, the first when he felt nothing but his isolation and alienation, and yet held to the land of his fathers; the second, when the consciousness of God's help in his former deliverance had become his mainstay and support.

The Interview between Moses and Jethro.

When Moses met Jethro he greeted him with the courtesy and respect of a son-in-law. He did obeisance to Jethro, kissed him and led him into his tent, just as Joseph greeted Jacob with respect and affection, having

no thought beyond the joy of meeting his father. How great a change had taken place in the position of Moses since he had last seen Jethro! Then Moses was an exile in the service of Jethro, now he is a leader of a nation, and more than that, he has defied and broken the power of Egypt, the second to none among the nations. His true manhood comes out in the absence of all consciousness of his great deeds when he greets Jethro.

Little more than a year had passed since Moses, full of his God-given commission, had met Aaron probably in this very district of the country, and the two brothers had talked over the past and the future together. Aaron had told of the oppression in Egypt, Moses of God's first appearance on Mount Sinai, and the command that had been given to him to free the Israelites. And now all that then seemed impossible had come to pass, and Moses and Jethro met in the tent, and Moses recounted the fulfilment of God's promises. We can almost see the scene, the intense earnestness of the two men, with Zipporah possibly in the background listening as Moses poured out the marvellous works of God, both in the destruction of Pharaoh and his house, and also in the subsequent deliverance of the Israelites from famine, drought, and battle. Both Moses and Jethro dwell only on what God has done, and on the deliverance which He has effected.

When we are speaking to our nearest friends, especially those connected with us, we are apt to throw off all disguise and to let our true self appear. We tell what has passed, emphasizing everything as it touches us personally; we recount what we ourselves have said and done, and they also look upon the matter from the personal standpoint only. The conventionality with which we speak of ourselves and our own doings when we are dealing with the outer world, lest we should appear self-centred and self-conscious, is laid aside, and our inner valuation of ourselves and of the work we have done, and the valuation which we think others have placed upon us, comes

into the forefront. But there could be no coming forward of Moses in this way, not even in his inmost thought and consciousness; he had almost lost his own identity in his thought and love for the cause of God. He cared only for what God had done, for the great cause of the right, and Jethro rejoices in God's dealing, so that for a time he seems one with the Israelites, and finally offers sacrifice with them, and thus puts himself among the number of those who stand beneath the shadow of the Atonement. How far Jethro realized the signification of the sacrifices they offered together we cannot tell, but consciously or unconsciously, he drew near in faith to the Christ who was to come. Then Aaron and the elders of Israel broke the bread of thanksgiving and rejoiced together before God.

Moses as Judge and Ruler of his People.

On the morrow Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood by him from morning until evening. Wherever men are, whether in the wilderness or in the city, disputes and difficulties arise amongst them, and in the wilderness up to this time Moses seems to have been referred to in every matter as leader and judge. It is possible that at the time when Jethro came there may have been more causes of dispute than usual on account of the victory which the Israelites had gained over the Amalekites. Whether this were so or not, from morning till evening he was engaged in the work, and the men pressed forward one upon another in order to get judgment, and to lay their cause before him. Probably Moses felt strongly the responsibility and urgency of this part of his work as leader of the people. He knew that he was standing between them and God. He knew also that he was laying the lines of justice and of judgment on which hereafter the people would be governed, and in the keenness of his interest he had probably taken up case after case before him without looking forward or counting the cost; but Jethro, with the eye of a statesman, saw that this could not be continued. In the first place, there was the exhausting nature of the work

which fell too heavily upon the strength of any one man ; and secondly, there was the unsatisfactoriness of the result, as it was impossible for any one man alone to take up all that had to be done immediately, and thus some causes were either neglected or left too long aside.

“Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee.” We see also a reference in verse 23 to the difficulty which the people had in getting immediate judgment. The advice which Jethro gave is memorable, not only in itself but also for the way in which it was given. As Jethro stood beside Moses he did not watch with the thought either of criticizing or of finding fault with him. He watched him with the eye of a true friend, and instead of saying to himself that he was about to return to the desert, and that the matter was not his, he considered what was passing, and when the opportunity arose he criticized and at the same time showed him how a better form of government could prevail. A true friend is one who, when he sees a difficulty, endeavours to find out how to remedy it, and also has the courage and the candour of his convictions. But if it takes greatness to know how to point out defects and how to remedy them, it needs even more greatness to be willing to take advantage of the reproof. Moses might fairly have thought that he alone could judge of the matter. He had been so close to God ; he had, through God, shown himself to be wiser than all the wisdom of Pharaoh and his councillors ; he had accomplished a task such as none before him had done, when he had led and sustained so vast a multitude in the wilderness, and when he had organized a helpless company of newly emancipated slaves so that they were able to conquer the army of Amalek. Why should he listen to an Arab sheikh, a man who had never ruled a kingdom, and who had only had authority over a mere handful of followers? Apart from all this, Moses had received an education and training which marked him out for the work which he was now doing. He had been trained in all the wisdom and in the court of Egypt ; why should he, with all his culture and experience, listen to this wayfarer of the desert? “But a wise man will

hear and will receive knowledge." A true test of a man's character is his power of taking reproof. If his mind is fixed upon his work and upon succeeding in it, he will be ready to take any suggestion no matter from whom it comes, if only by so doing he can increase his power of doing his work efficiently and well. But if a man's mind is fixed upon himself and whilst carrying out of his work, his underlying thought is how to demonstrate his own power and wisdom; then he will resent any reproof given to him, because the mere fact of a reproof may seem to imply that the man who makes it is wiser than he to whom it is given.

The Remedy which is Suggested.

Jethro points out that Moses is wearing out not only himself but also his people, and, therefore, he bids him divide his work into two parts. The first and greatest part of his duty is the relationship between himself and God, and that belongs to Moses and to Moses only. He is a mediator and leader of the people. The second part is the acting as a judge over the people, and the settling of disputes. This, Jethro points out, should be put into the hands of the ablest men whom Moses can find. He should train them and bring them forward so that they can take his place. In the battle of Amalek Moses had stood back and had given the honour and the glory to Joshua, so now in the daily management of the Israelites Moses is again to stand back and to give the actual work, the management and the honour, into the hands of the people of God, and to teach the laws and ordinances of God to them. He is to be the lawgiver and not the judge; the guide, but not the administrator.

The Character of a True Statesmen.

It is strange that Jethro, a man coming from the deserts of Arabia, should not only have been able to mark out the best way of governing Israel, but should also have given with bold touch the characteristics which lie at the foundation of the character of a good statesman in a way which the wisdom of all succeeding ages has not been able to excel. Thus

Jethro bids Moses select able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, for these are the fundamental characteristics of a good judge.

Able men,—that is to say, men of strength, men who have shown their strength by being able first to bring their own lives and characters into obedience to the God of truth.

Men who fear God,—and have thus shown that they live in His fear.

Men of truth,—who are seeking righteousness, both in themselves and in others.

Men who hate covetousness,—that is to say, the taking of bribes, or, as Maclaren puts it, “the corruptness of eastern statesmanship, the oiling of the palms of eastern judges.” These are the men who are to be entrusted with the duty of bringing the lives of others under the laws of justice and into the paths of righteousness. These are the men who are to stand out above the nation. Judges with clean hands who will be able to say, like Samuel, “Whose ox have I taken, whom have I defrauded”?

It can be seen at a glance that if Moses could bring forward and place in authority men of this stamp and character how much the nation would be strengthened, whereas if he continued to attempt to concentrate all power in himself alone the nation would rest upon one man only. And Jethro goes even further. He suggests that the people should be organized and divided under rulers and sub-rulers. It is said that Alfred the Great, who was well versed in the Bible, based his own Saxon constitution of sheriffs in counties on the axioms of the Mosaic division which was suggested by Jethro, and that this foundation of government has since become, not only in Israel, but also in other nations, a well-spring of order and of justice. It is interesting to compare this passage with Deuteronomy i. 9-19, in which Moses records his address to the people and the institution of the new form of government.

The Growth of Israel.

How quickly the nation of Israel has grown! It was but

a few months ago that they were bound in hopeless slavery, now they are not only free, but they are beginning to receive a settled organization and government of their own, and the men who had recently smarted under the whips of their taskmasters are already beginning to enjoy the blessings of wise government and civilization.

This advice having been given, Jethro departed to his own land, having received a rich blessing, but also having left a blessing behind him. If Jethro is identical with Hobab or with Reuel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law (Numbers x. 29), it seems that Moses was very unwilling to let him go, and pleaded with him that he would stay and cast in his lot with Israel, and to be to them instead of eyes. Possibly he went back for a season and then returned. From later references in the Bible, such as in Judges i. 16 and 1 Samuel xv. 6, he and his descendants seem to have been one with the Israelites, and to have gone into Canaan with them.

LESSON XIX.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XIX.

THE APPROACH TO MOUNT SINAI.

WHEN Moses at the burning bush had asked God, "Who am I that I should bring forth the children of Israel?" two pledges had been given to him. One, that he should have an abiding sense of the perpetual presence of God, the second, that when he had brought the people forth out of Egypt, they should serve God upon Mount Sinai. This second promise was now about to be fulfilled.

A Holy Nation, a Peculiar People.

The Israelites had at last reached the first goal of their journey and were encamped around Mount Sinai. Whilst they halted there, Moses went up alone into the mountain to receive the revelation of God for Israel, and to learn what He, their God, was willing to do and be for them. This revelation seems far beyond what they, a nation just reclaimed from slavery, could have hoped or expected to receive. As an eagle, with her eaglets upon her back, wings her way with power, swiftness, and majesty, so God had brought out the Israelites and preserved them from the power of Pharaoh, in order to open out still further and greater privileges to them. For the first time their high calling is definitely put before them. If they on their side will obey God and keep His covenant, then they shall be to Him a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, that is to say, a race of men



privileged to enter into the immediate presence of God, set apart for His worship and service, set apart and freed from the power of sin. We are sometimes apt to think with Bacon that "Prosperity is the promise of the Old Testament and Adversity of the New." Later on, because the Jews were not responsive to higher motives, God promises them in return for doing His will, long life, wealth, peace, or possession of land; but at Mount Sinai, at the commencement of their national life, He makes a grander promise, a promise similar to that given through Malachi at the close of the Old Testament dispensation, "Thou shalt be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels," a promise almost identically the same with that in the Epistles of Peter when the Christian is called out to be one of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."

Moses standing on Mount Sinai sees a vista open before the nation greater than the eye can see, the ear can hear, or than can enter into the heart of man to conceive. From the mountain God is about to teach the people, to reveal His own nature, and to impart to them of that nature so that they may be like Him. He is a holy God, and if they obey His voice they also shall partake of that holiness. This is what Moses proclaimed to the elders of the people when they were gathered together, he recited to them the words which God had commanded him, and all the people answered and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." How little they understood what holiness was, how little the sinfulness and weakness of their own character! How sad the contrast seems between the high calling of Israel and their history even to the present day. How far away Israel still is, either from being a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, or from carrying out their promise, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

The Approach of God upon Mount Sinai.

This first thought of the holiness of God and of the holiness to which they are called is enforced by the

command which bids them cleanse themselves before they draw near to Mount Sinai, or God draws near to them. Before God can speak to them or they can approach God, they must sanctify themselves. They must go apart, and by an outward cleansing of garments typify that which they needed, the inward cleansing of the soul. This lesson is further enforced by the bounds which Moses is commanded to put around the mountain lest any "should break through to come up unto the Lord." Then when all were gathered together, on the third day in the morning, God revealed Himself further to them.

"The King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts."

The glory of God descended in a cloud upon Mount Sinai. The whole mountain was, as it were, on fire with a majestic glory, with thunderings and lightnings, a thick cloud and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud. Human words fail when we seek to portray in them the things of God. What this approach was, these thunderings and lightnings, we cannot tell. Any of us who have experienced one of the great convulsions of nature, such as that of earthquakes or of storms, knows how men are shaken and tremble, feeling that they are in the immediate presence of God, and, therefore, we do not wonder at this manifestation, probably far transcending anything that human nature has ever known either of thunder or of earthquake, that all the people who were in the camp trembled and felt something of the power and majesty of God.

"Our God is a Consuming Fire."

The people had been told to purify themselves as far as they could. But though outwardly they might be cleansed, inwardly they were still defiled by sin. Therefore, they had to keep apart, and we are told that an unhallowed gaze, a careless touch, would have brought destruction upon them. It was only when Israel approached God through an innocent life given for their life that they were able to come into His tabernacle or His temple. It is only

through the life of Christ crucified for us that we can approach the throne of God and find grace and help in time of need.

"God is a Spirit."

The heart of man always has craved and always will crave for something visible to worship. The Israelites had been accustomed in Egypt to see everywhere a visible representation of the gods which the Egyptians worshipped, and had probably drawn near to the mountain in the hope that they too at last would see something visible to which their nature could cling, and which they could worship with the eye as well as with the spirit.

The vast burning cloud which descended upon the mountain showed them something of the glory of God, but it showed them at the same time that God was a Spirit, and that He could be worshipped only in spirit and in truth.

"Ye heard the voice of the words, but *saw no similitude.*"

God their Leader and their King.

An important lesson which each man who was standing there received was that God, and God only, was their Leader, their Guide, and their King. As years went on they might be tempted to look upon Moses with awe and reverence, and to think that if not actually God, he was akin to God, and stood to the Israelites as Pharaoh to the Egyptians. But after this vision upon the mount, such imagination was finally and forever at an end. Moses was but an ambassador, one who bore to them the commands of their King, one who might stand between them and God, but who was of a nature akin to themselves, having nothing of the purity, the majesty, the spirituality of God. When we remember the darkness and idolatry of Egypt from which the Israelites had just come, we see how necessary it was that their imaginations should be cleansed from all former conceptions which they might have about the nature and property of God. They were about to go

forward into Canaan to conquer cities fouler in their idolatry than even Egypt. Their minds had not only to be cleared from the misconceptions of the past, they had also to be guarded against the contamination of the future. From that time forth, although we know that again and again they wilfully fell into sin, for making a golden calf, and seeking out idols of their own invention, yet despite themselves they knew that God was a Spirit, and they could always be recalled to this marvellous manifestation of the glory and spirituality of God which they had either seen with their own eyes, or which they had heard by tradition from their fathers.

LESSON XX.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XIX. 16—XX.

THE MAGNA CHARTA OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness.

When Moses had stood with awe and trembling beside the burning bush, feeling alike his own insufficiency for the task and the insufficiency of the response which the Israelites would give to the call of God, he had been given a token, a pledge that his work would one day be accomplished, his success assured. The promise was that he, together with all Israel, should worship God upon Mount Sinai, under which he stood. The fulfilment of this promise, that is to say, the gathering together of Israel to worship God upon Mount Sinai, was, in very truth, the great purpose of the deliverance. At first sight we might think that the escape of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and the establishment of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in Canaan, were the great purposes of the books of the Old Testament; that is to say, that the Old Testament history was mainly concerned with the story of the foundation and progress of an earthly kingdom, of the calling out of a nation of slaves, and their gradual progress until they were established as a great nation under a king like Solomon, but it is not so. The Old Testament, as well as the New, has as its main thought, its main purpose, the founding of the spiritual kingdom of God, and the revelation of the steps by which this kingdom is gradually established upon earth. We see the progress of the revelation in the degree in

which the nature of God is revealed to man, and in the degree in which the hearts of men are inspired to receive that revelation ; that is to say, the growth of God's kingdom may be judged by the revelation of the means and ways whereby man may approach to God and partake of the holiness of His nature, and by the response which man is able to make to the revelation of that nature, and by the growth in him of God-like character, thoughts, words, and actions.

The Israelites were probably as ignorant of the purposes underlying their deliverance from Egypt as were the Jews of the meaning of the establishment of Christ's Kingdom in Jerusalem or as the men of to-day are of the progress of the spiritual kingdom around them. But whether they apprehended it or not, those who were far off, as well as those who were near, felt the influence of the giving of the laws of righteousness and the gradual establishment of the kingdom of righteousness, just as those who reject Christianity to-day, whether they know it or not, are influenced and moulded in greater or less degree by the Sermon on the Mount.

The First Laws of Nature and of the Spiritual and Moral World.

There are certain great primal laws of nature, such as those that were given to Noah, "seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." These have been recognized by men, and they depend upon them, and regulate their lives and work in accordance with them. There are also certain great primal laws of the spiritual and ethical world which prevail, and men depend upon them and are happy according as their lives are regulated by them. The greatest of these primal laws are those which we call the Ten Commandments.

The Majesty of the Ten Commandments.

At first sight some have questioned the greatness of these commandments because they are concerned with justice

and justice only. They are commandments of limitation rather than of expansion; they are negative, and as such belong to a child nation rather than to those who are called the Sons of God. It is true that all but two are prohibitions and not injunctions, but even so there are two facts which have to be considered; in the first place, the Mosaic law was required as a necessary discipline and a preparatory step before men were ready for the more spiritual teaching of the Sermon on the Mount; in the second place, when we consider them carefully, and in the light of Christ's teaching, we see how capable they are of expansion, how they are the foundation stones of moral law and order, and of all the codes of law in the civilized kingdoms of the world. As foundation stones they stand apart with a spiritual grandeur of their own. The research and learning of generations of men have discovered great things both in the natural and in the intellectual world, but they have discovered nothing which has shaken one jot or one tittle of the ten great truths which are called the Ten Commandments. None other than our Saviour, Christ Himself, ever laid a foundation stone beside them of equal truth and beauty. That foundation stone is not only equal to, but surpasses all the others.

The Eleventh Commandment.

Christ, the Word of God, added to the Ten Commandments, the eleventh, that commandment which transfuses and illuminates all the others. "This is My commandment: That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (St. John xv. 12, or St. Matthew xxii. 37, 38).

It illuminates because it creates a new standard. Moses had bidden the Israelites love the Lord their God (Deuteronomy x. 12, xi. 22, xxx. 16, 20). Jesus by His life opened the eyes of men to see the glory of Divine love, its beauty of self-sacrifice, intensity, and compassion, a love that passeth knowledge. He calls on all who follow Him to love one another with a like passion of self-sacrifice and devotion, and to be satisfied with no lower standard.

The Commandments given not for the Israelitish Nation only, but for the whole World.

The Ten Commandments belong not to the Israelitish nation only, but to the whole world. They are the birthright of man as man. This is true not because there is any proclamation saying so, but because the Ten Commandments are as necessary to any one tribe or race of men as they are to another. They are equally binding on every human being, because by them every man learns what is his true orbit or place in the world ; that is to say, these God-given truths place man in the true orbit of his relationship to God, and to his fellow-man ; these he must obey if he and those around him are to be happy, for if he swerves from them he brings sorrow and destruction upon himself and upon others.

The Giving of the Ten Commandments.

The grandeur of the scene upon Mount Sinai surpasses imagination. We see the mountain two miles long and one mile broad, with the glory of God resting upon it. or, as it is described in human phraseology, a glowing mass of flame and smoke, from which thunderings and lightnings proceeded, mingled with the voice of God. The leaders of the nation are gathered together at the foot of the mountain, but who and what are they to come into the presence of God? It is true that they have purified themselves outwardly as far as they are able, but their hearts are still far from God. They have learned but little of His nature, although they have seen something of the wonder of His miracles in Egypt, and of His subsequent goodness to them. They have had some faint glimmering of the wonder, the majesty, and the love of God, but they know very little about the sinfulness of their own hearts, the remoteness of their nature from God, and it is this further revelation which is about to be made to them. As they listen in awestruck silence the voice of God sounds upon their ears, and they tremble, although the first words that are spoken are words of love. God, as it were, draws near to them, and in His opening words tells them that the

voice which now speaks to them is the same voice which set them free from the slavery of Pharaoh, and is about to set them free from the slavery of Satan, an enemy far more deadly and more powerful than the King of Egypt.

The First Commandment.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me;" or, as spoken by Moses and quoted by Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Deep down in every human heart there is a mysterious yearning for God, a craving for union with a Being infinitely greater and holier than man, and this craving can only be satisfied by union with God. Jesus explains this to the woman at the well. He told her that "whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again"; that is to say, that earthly water or earthly pleasure could never satisfy spiritual thirst. It might be slaked for the moment, but it would return again and again, "but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst (St. John iv. 14).

We all know that there is one supreme object in every human heart towards which it turns, whether that object is the love of the Divine or the love of a human being, or the love of self. Just as the leaf or flower turns towards the sun, so man turns in thought and action towards the supreme object of his affection. If that object is self he will strive for power, advancement, or pleasure. If it is wife or child he will strive towards whatever will advance the happiness or well-being of the wife or child, and for them he will live, move, and have his being. The will of God for man is that over and above the natural love which we have for one another, over and above the love of self, shall be the love of God, and that this shall transfuse the whole man, his affections, mind, and being, and that according as he is thus transfused he will be brought into harmony with what ought to be the great movement of the creation; that is to say, into harmony, love, and obedience with the will of God. If we find that this first love of our hearts is not given to God, then whatever is the first object of our affection, whatever is

the overmastering impulse of our lives, must be cast down and brought into obedience so that God may be all in all. This is why we pray, "Graft in our hearts the love of Thy name, increase in us true religion."

The Second Commandment.

The First Commandment emphasizes the Unity of God, the Second His Spirituality. At first sight it would seem as though the Second Commandment were meant for Israel only, or for heathen nations, and not for us. We can understand that a nation which had just come out of Egypt and which was about to go into Canaan would be in great danger of yielding to idols. There is a natural tendency in man to worship the visible rather than the invisible. The Second Commandment teaches that this tendency must be resisted, for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," (St. John iv. 24). God in His wisdom knows that if our souls are to be drawn upward it must be by the lifting up of our souls to Him. It cannot be by the stooping down of our souls to an earthly object of worship. This is what is meant when God says that He is a jealous God. We naturally think of jealousy as an evil passion because we usually know it as such, and yet jealousy in itself is a passion exquisite in beauty, so exquisite that through its very delicacy and power it is dangerous and too often abused. By jealousy we understand, indignation against anything which interferes between the love which would exist between God and man or between human beings towards one another. In the latter case if the love be God-given and lawful and right, it should be kept pure and free from interception or shadow. Jealousy is indignation against anything which intercepts the sunlight of affection. The husband has a right to the unclouded sunshine or love of his wife, and the wife to that of her husband; a father or mother has a right to the unclouded love of their children, and anything which causes a shadow, which interrupts the transmission of that love, is resented, because such a shadow injures both parent and children. Thus a mother has a right to be jealous if a stranger places

himself between her and the children, and to their grievous injury draws away their rightful love. There is something exquisitely beautiful in the thought that God loves us so much that He is a jealous God; that is to say, that He watches lest anything by coming in between should darken and destroy our love for Him. The sunshine of God's love always descends in full measure upon man, but the sin of man raises a dark cloud around him and intercepts the rays of God's love. Moreover, God tells us that there is a reason for this jealousy even beyond the injury which sin causes by separating the individual soul from God, because there is a further danger, for the sin which causes the cloud will cast its shadow not only upon the man himself but upon his children and his children's children.

The Law of Heredity.

We cannot explain the causation of this law, but we do know that if men have a tendency towards a sin this same tendency is transmitted to their children and to their children's children. Thus in the present instance, if the children of Israel were to give way to idolatry the tendency towards idolatry would grow stronger and stronger in each succeeding generation—as, indeed, proved to be the case, until for their idolatry they were carried away from the land of their inheritance.

God is a jealous, or zealous, God, because He loves man and knows that although the beginning of sin may be small its further working means misery and destruction, and this destruction and misery will not be bounded by the lives of those who sin. But together with this law of judgment comes also the declaration of God's mercy, which is full and overflowing to those who love Him; that is to say, upon those who keep an unclouded relationship between their souls and Him, and show the unclouded nature of that relationship by their consequent ability to keep His commandment and to walk according to His will.

Jesus emphasized the necessity for the same keeping of His Commandments, John xiv. 15, but accompanied the

command by the promise of the Holy Spirit—the enabling power.

Is it Hopeless to Struggle against Hereditary Tendencies?

The answer to this is found in Ezekiel xviii. 4, 20; Ezekiel xxxiii. 19. The grace of God can suffice, can overcome the force of all hereditary tendencies, for by the grace of God the Spirit of God working within a man's heart becomes the dominating spirit of his life, no matter whether he has inherited the evil tendencies of a thousand years or of a few days.

The one thing that can contravene the tendency to sin is the creation of a new spirit. The new spirit of love to God will be pure, and as it gains ascendancy in a man's soul will overcome the impure, and render possible the otherwise impossible. This explains what is meant by the mercy unto thousands of them that love Me. If the sins of the fathers descend upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, the mercy of God descends upon thousands and thousands in those who love Him and keep His commandments; in other words, those who let their light so shine that men may see and glorify their Father which is in Heaven.

There is hope in this promise of a wider blessing in the future than has as yet been granted. It was much dwelt upon and quoted by the Jews, cp. Nehemiah i. 5. We see the first fruits of it in the power and influence for good which one man may exercise not only upon his own generation but also upon those yet for to come. Who can estimate the mercy of God which has descended from a Lord Shaftesbury, a Dr. Barnardo, or a George Müller?

The Third Commandment.

Together with this declaration of the will of God that the whole heart of man must be surrendered in absolutely unclouded relationship comes the warning that this same relationship is to be one of reverence and awe. The Third Commandment is not merely a law against swearing, or the

use of evil language. It goes far deeper. In the first place, it touches the misuse of the worship of God for a man's own purposes, or for purposes of man's devising; that is to say, the name of God is not to be taken in vain by dealings in magic, or for the founding of strange religions in which a man will endeavour to make unlawful use of his knowledge of God. Christ gives the spirit of the commandment when He says, "swear not at all, but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay." That is to say, let your whole attitude be one of quiet truth, of thought, word, and deed. The attitude of man should be one of quiet reverence towards God, and towards the things of God, reverence in worship as well as in word. It touches also our attitude towards the word of God, towards religion and religious life, and guards against hypocrisy; that is to say, against the profession which is greater than reality. The taking of God's name in vain is the outcome of a spirit very far away from that of Christ, who revered His Father's house, and taught the disciples to pray, "hallowed be Thy name."

LESSON XXI.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XIX. 16—XX.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT, THE NECESSARY COMPLEMENT TO THE FIRST THREE COMMANDMENTS.

THE first three commandments were given so that from them men might learn what the right attitude of their souls should be towards God. They learned to lift up their souls in love and adoration, and to keep their love unclouded from the interposition of any earthly object which might draw them away from Heaven to earth. They were to have a holy awe and reverence for the Name; that is to say, for the Personality of God. Men in every century of the world's history, have admitted the beauty of this ideal, and some have responded to it in their hearts and lives, and according to the strength of their response has been the desire to be alone at times with God. This feeling is more than a desire, it is a necessity of the spiritual life, for if the soul is never alone with God it cannot be lifted up from the visible to the invisible; a feeling of awe and reverence cannot have dominion over it; a man cannot be kept in the true attitude of worship and of approach; nor can he, surrounded as he is by earthly things, and with a natural appetite and desire for them, lift up his soul in adoration and love to God; or, as an old writer expresses it, "keep the secret of the perpetual presence of God."

This yearning for recurrent seasons of quiet approach to God has always found one chief source of its satisfaction

in the setting apart of one day in seven as a day of rest and sanctification. God, who created the soul of man, knew that a day of rest was as necessary for the soul as for the body, and, therefore, out of his knowledge and love for man, bade him "remember the seventh day to keep it holy."

What God commanded on Mount Sinai He had before instituted by his own example. "On the seventh day God ended the work which He had made, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made, and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He rested from all His work which God created and made." The period of time may differ but the proportion of rest is the same.

It is thought that the seventh day of rest was observed before the command was given on Mount Sinai. Whether this was so or not, we know that the Jews were not permitted to gather manna on the seventh day.

The Teaching of Christ as to the Sabbath Day.

Christ illuminated the law of the Sabbath Day both by His example and by His teaching. By His example we learn that He went up to the temple on the seventh day and took part in the public worship. He did works of mercy and of healing. He taught His disciples as to the things of God. By permitting His disciples to gather corn for their eating on the Sabbath Day, He swept away the superstitious observances which had grown up around it. He enforced the keeping of the spirit of the law instead of the letter. By His teaching He proclaimed that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and said the "Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day." That is to say, He as Lord of the Sabbath Day decreed that it was to be used for the benefit and well-being of man, for his soul and for his body. It was not an end in itself, it was a means towards an end. Man needs a period of rest for his body, a time in which his thought will be freed from worldly cares and pleasures, so that his soul may be set free and given opportunity to approach God. Jesus taught

this by His example: He went apart to pray, and in His great lesson on prayer His first direction was as to the putting away of earthly distractions so that the soul might concentrate itself on God. "Enter into thy closet and shut to thy door." If a man gives his body the right periods of rest, it will be kept at its highest state of activity; if he gives his soul a breathing space, an opportunity for seeking strength from God, it also will be refreshed and kept in communion with God. Each man, therefore, is responsible to keep those two talents which have been committed to him, the powers of his body and the powers of his soul, in the state in which they can best be used in his Master's service, that is to say, in health, well-being and activity. He will order the seventh day so that his soul will be kept in harmony with the spirit of the day. He will find the wisdom of the command given by Isaiah, and will turn aside his foot from seeking his own pleasure on the seventh day. If he is the head of the household he will have respect towards every member of his household. It is his duty to give each member of it a like period of cessation from work, a like opportunity for seeking God, and he will extend this period of rest even to the cattle and to the stranger who is within his gates. This stranger may not fear God but he is to enjoy the blessing of a Sabbath rest.

The question of the seventh day has been considered only from the standpoint of the benefit to the individual man which comes from a right observance of it. We have also to take into consideration the joy and honour for the nation as well as the individual which is connected with it. It is the day on which we have the opportunity of openly acknowledging God as our King, of showing that His commands take precedence of all else, and of witnessing by our conduct that the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is above and beyond all else that is around us.

The Fifth Commandment.

Midway between the duty which man owes to God or to his fellow man, we find the Fifth Commandment teaching

the duty of children to their parents. In earliest days, the parent is the shadow of God to the child, and until that child comes to an age when his soul can be drawn into nearer relationship with God, his father and mother stand to him in the place of God. Children, therefore, are bidden to honour their parents. By honour we understand somewhat of the same spirit which the Third Commandment has bidden us to show towards God, for honour includes love, obedience, and succour, in the spirit as well as in the letter.

This commandment is given a special place among the Ten Commandments, because a promise of peculiar blessing is attached to the observance of it. It is as St. Paul says the commandment with promise, a blessing from God is to fall on the tribe or family which is marked out by a spirit of reverence.

It is the duty and the privilege of every parent to call out in his children a spirit of reverence towards himself, and as they grow in years and understanding gradually to direct that spirit of reverence towards himself into a spirit of obedience, love and worship towards God.

When parents spoil their children, or allow over-familiarity in their families, they not only reap sorrow to themselves by losing the command over their children which they ought to have, but they also do positive wrong to the children themselves by placing them at the beginning of their lives in a wrong relationship towards themselves and towards God; that is to say, they do not train them in a right spirit of law and of reverence. They do not lead them to strike the true keynote of their life which will bring them into harmony with the will of God for time and for eternity. They do not prepare them for that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom.

The Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Commandments.

These three commandments teach the sanctity of life, marriage and of property. Life is sacred because man is made in the image of God. Marriage is sacred because it was instituted by God and because the love

of the husband to the wife typifies the love of God to His Church, but Christ carries the thought deeper still, and shows that not simply the overt acts of transgression such as murder, adultery and theft, come under the range of these commandments, but that the roots from which these deadly plants spring are evil also. The outburst of anger or of hatred, the impure or common thought, word or look, the over-reaching in small matters, all fall under the range of these three commandments. All have the same deadly poison of sin within them. An overhanging branch of poison-ivy may be very deadly, but a sprig of the same ivy is deadly also. The eruption from a volcano may come forth with a terrific sweep from a burning mass below, but the clouds of smoke and the small ashes which are shot up from the volcano have just as much their source, and are of the same nature as the burning mass below.

Hence the necessity for the prayer, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name."

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

This law forbids the taking of the life of another and condemns what is the climax of a long train of evil. The spirit of antagonism and hatred is natural to man, and possibly had its first origin in an instinct of self-preservation; but this instinct goes further and develops in different ways according to different characters. The phases may be different, but all partake of the same spirit of alienation and hatred, until at last some find their full and final outcome in the act of murder.

Some of these different phases are easily recognised when they take the pronounced forms of "envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness," but they are not so universally discerned under the lighter and less repellent forms of sarcasm, coldness, unnecessary criticism and contempt, because they wear the mask of cleverness; and yet when touched by the law of love they lose this mask and return as by the touch of an Ithuriel's spear each "of force to its

own likeness"—a likeness that shows that they belong to the family of hatred and of murder. The law of love, the law which not only "suffereth long and is kind," but also "thinketh no evil," shows by the contrast of its spirit what the law of hatred really is.

Moses in Leviticus xix. 17, 18 places these two laws side by side: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart . . . thou shalt not avenge . . . nor bear any grudge . . . but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The essence of the Teaching of Christ and His Apostles in the New Testament is clear upon this subject? Thou shalt not be "as Cain who was of that wicked one and slew his brother" (1 John iii. 12), thou shalt not have the spirit of hate from which his deed sprang, for "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15), but thou shalt "abide in love," "thou shalt love others as I have loved you." This standard of My love to you is the new standard towards which thou shalt reach forward, far higher even than the standard of the old law, for My love to thee is as far beyond thy love of thyself as the Divine love is beyond the mortal love. But "without Me ye can do nothing"; therefore "the Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all truth" . . . "he dwelleth with you and shall be in you"; by this Spirit thou "wilt not be angry with thy brother without cause"; thou wilt "work no ill to thy brother"; thou wilt, "if thy neighbour smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also"; thou wilt, even if the call of God come to thee, be ready to lay down "thy life for the brethren."

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Christ most sternly enforces this law, and enlarges it so that we may know its full scope and intent. He shows that it is not only the overt act of sin itself which is condemned, but it is also those tendencies and thoughts which partake of the same character as the act and which, if fully indulged in, might lead on to that act as their legitimate conclusion. Even the careless glance or touch must be shunned, it is

the outcome of a heart inclined towards evil rather than towards that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

We are called to come out and to be separate, to "touch not the unclean thing." If so it is our duty to keep away from everything which will arouse evil emotions, desires, or passions in our hearts, because whatever draws our thoughts and imaginations away from God and down to what is common and unclean is evil. Therefore we ought to avoid any companions, scenes, or amusements which call out and nourish the lower side of our nature. We ought to shun a foolish or sinful companion, a light jest, a doubtful play, a doubtful book. Whatever brings evil imaginations or thoughts into our minds, whatever darkens or removes us from the near presence of God is sin. Moreover, since "no man liveth to himself," whether we will or no, in God's sight we are our brother's keeper. We must avoid whatever we find arouses evil imaginations in others, even though it may not in ourselves, so that we may help forward the general movement towards things wherewith "one may edify another."

Neither can we take pleasure in amusements the provision of which exposes the souls of others to folly or to sin. David would not drink "the blood of them which went in jeopardy of their lives." There is a beautiful thought connected with the Seventh Commandment. It is peculiarly the commandment of promise, even more so than the Fifth. Christ says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." To see God is the promised reward of purity, and there is no promise greater than this. Moses, David, Elijah, Paul thirsted for the immediate presence of God as the one satisfaction of their souls.

Therefore, "Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things": upon these let our souls dwell if we would be in peace and in communion with God. We should make it our daily prayer that the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts may be always acceptable in His sight.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt not steal." As the words of this commandment ring out, how few of us feel that we fall under its condemnation? Theft seems so miserable a thing in itself, and its consequences so terrible, that we shrink even from the thought of such a deed. How despicable was Achan, how pitiful to all Israel the sight of the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment for which he had seen fit to barter his life and soul! What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? And we do not stop to consider that all the acts by which we overreach one another, by which we take credit which does not truly belong to us, by which we defraud one another, all acts of hypocrisy, every act by which we hurt another in word or deed, fall under this heading. We are called "to be true and just in all our dealings," as well as "to keep our hands from picking and stealing."

We find in the old Law, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him" (Lev. xix. 13). We may defraud another in many ways besides actually stealing from him. The petty acts of deceit, the overreaching, the taking advantage of his stupidity, ignorance, weakness, mistakes, needs, and shortcomings, all show the same attitude of mind as theft, that is to say the attitude of ill-will to our neighbour. If the attitude of our mind towards our neighbour is one of love, we can "work no ill" to him any more than we can work ill to ourselves. But we must do more than work no ill; we must follow the example of Christ, who not only did no ill, but who also "went about doing good." The character which seeks to take advantage of another stands out in its true light when contrasted with the character of Christ, who gave Himself for us. St. Paul bids us "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Love, therefore, is to be the constraining impulse of our lives, that with which all our thoughts and acts are to be in sympathy. "Seeketh not her own." How can this harmonise with credit gained at the expense of another, either for cleverness or for goodness by a half truth or by deceit, with

money acquired by sharp practice or by underpaying those too weak or too ignorant to protect themselves? How grand the challenge of Samuel sounds when at the end of a long life—a life exposed to peculiar temptations—he calls all Israel to witness and says, “Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or of whose hand have I taken any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?” “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart” (Psalm xxiv. 3, 4). “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes. . . . He shall dwell on high . . . bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure” (Isaiah xxxiii. 15, 16).

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

From overt acts of sin we pass to the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, to those which are offences, not of deed, but of word and of thought, all the more deadly and the more far-reaching in their consequences, because they are hidden and cannot be openly dealt with. It is better to lose property or life than character. The Ninth Commandment strikes at a sin which may cost another his good name, may take from him that which he cannot recover even by the sacrifice of his life. The Ninth Commandment touches not only the bearing of false witness against another, but it concerns also our whole attitude towards another. When we speak of our strong suspicion as though it were a fact, when we exaggerate, when we impute motives which may or may not exist, but at any rate for which we have no authority, when we misrepresent the cause or character of another, we bear false witness, and as truly break God's commandments as when we offend against any of the other nine. “Judge not and ye shall not be judged.” “Love thinketh no evil of his neighbour.” “Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people” (Lev. xix. 16). “Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off”

(Psalm ci. 5). "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs xvii. 9).

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

To covet is the brooding upon, the desire to acquire the possession of another's worldly goods, his position, his fame, his character. It is not the desire to acquire the like goods, position, fame, or character, so much as the longing to wrest from another that which is already his. It is not a determination to work in order that we may be possessed of a like benefit, but a longing to take away that benefit and keep it for ourselves. The steps by which coveting works in the mind are told at the beginning of the history of man. Eve saw that the tree was good for food, it was pleasant to the eyes, it was to be desired to make one wise. It is also clearly given in the confession of Achan, "I saw, I coveted, I took," and in each case we see the ruin which this sin of coveting brings with it, for the thought of the heart gradually finds expression in the act and leads others to the like sin also. "She gave also unto her husband and he did eat."

The Cause of Covetousness.

The root of covetousness is selfishness, and selfishness is the setting up of an idol in the heart in place of the love of God. Therefore when we break the Tenth Commandment we break the first also, for covetousness becomes the mainspring of our life, and self becomes our supreme good. The question is also one of our general attitude towards life. If we give way to covetousness we gradually look upon life from a self-seeking point of view, instead of from the standpoint of helping others also; that is to say, we desire to take from a man that which is his, we do not rejoice with him in the good that God has given him, and the effect of our longing will be that consciously or unconsciously our energy will find out means by which we may deprive him of his good. Coveting is the turning of our steps

towards the path of stealing. This longing for what is not our own is inborn in us. It is part of our general rebellion against what the will of God has ordained for us, and as such it partakes of what we understand by original sin.

The Remedy for this Sin.

The attitude of mind in contradiction to that of coveting or desiring other men's goods is very clearly given in the Catechism; it is "to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me."

The inspiration of God's holy Spirit, which will gradually take possession of the whole nature and fill the entire man with love of God and therefore of his fellow-man, which will turn his first thought to God and then to others, instead of self, is the only possible means of keeping this or any of the ten commandments. David knew this when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." "Let the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight." St. Paul bade us "covet earnestly the best gifts." It is the longing for the heavenly which will alone exclude the earthly. Let our prayer be that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and that God's Holy Spirit may so direct and rule our hearts that we may love the thing which He commands and desire that which He doth promise.

The Effect of the Giving of the Law upon Moses and upon the People.

We have been considering the Ten Commandments with the illumination of Christ's teaching upon them. To the Israelites they came as ten words, of which eight were prohibitions and two injunctions. But even so, ten words of judgment; for what man was there amongst them who had not broken one or all of those ten words of God? Terror-stricken, the Israelites were possessed by one thought, and one alone, and that was determination to depart from

the presence of God. They were physically terrified by the thunderings and lightnings. They were spiritually terrified by the revelation of the farawayness of their souls from God. They implored Moses to be the mediator, and to intercede for them. Why did not Moses feel a like fear? We know that he physically trembled, for we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." But Moses had the constraining fear which springs from love and which drew him towards God at all costs, and, therefore, though his flesh might tremble he was willing to be the mediator between God and the people.

Contrast of the Giving of the Law on Mount Sinai with the Sermon on the Mount.

How far away the thunderings and lightnings on Mount Sinai seem from the teaching of Christ upon the sunny slopes of the mountain! How far away the stern denunciation of God against sin from the words of love with which Christ drew men's hearts towards the law of God; and yet after all, is the new commandment easier to keep than the old law? Is it easier to abstain from certain acts than to give up the whole life, thought, and being in consecration to God? Why, then, if sin is as abhorrent to Christ as to God, and if the wrath of God must ever fall upon sin, should the Sermon on the Mount, which goes so much deeper into the heart of man, be full of hope? We are drawn towards this deeper standard of love instead of, like the Israelites, praying that we may depart from the presence of God. Wherein does the difference lie? It is not in any lowering of the standard of the purity required between God and man; it lies in the raising of man towards God. The consciousness of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, which implants in us freely of His own desire for purity, of His own power to resist sin, fills us with hope, so that we feel that instead of the consciousness of a law which we have broken and which we know that, despite ourselves, we shall break again, we have the eye of the Physician resting upon us, the touch of His holy hand, power from Him to do as He bids us "arise and walk."

LESSON XXII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XX. 18, XXII AND XXIII.

THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

The Effect of the Giving of the Law upon Moses and upon the People.

As the children of Israel stood gathered together at the foot of Mount Sinai, as they saw the thunderings and the lightnings and heard the voice of the trumpet they were filled with fear and trembling.

God had promised Moses at the burning bush that He would reveal himself to Israel as the Great I AM, the living Personal Presence. This had been done in part when they were redeemed from the bondage of Egypt and brought out into freedom. They had then rejoiced in God's protection, they had seen the overthrow of their enemies.

At Mount Sinai God was revealing to them the way in which they were to walk if they would be redeemed from the bondage of sin, but the outward manifestations of the thunder and lightning, that is to say, of the wrath of God against sin, together with the inward wickedness of their souls, filled them with awe and dread instead of rejoicing. They had heard the ten words, that is to say, the eight prohibitions, and the two injunctions, but to all alike they were words of judgment. Each man knew that he had broken one or all of these ten words of God. Terror-stricken, they were possessed by one thought only and that thought a determination to depart from the presence of God. They

were physically terrified by the thunderings and lightnings. They were spiritually terrified by the revelation of the distance of their souls from God. They implored Moses to be the mediator and to speak between God and man.

Why was not Moses afraid, why did he not determine to depart from the presence of God? He had heard the proclamation of the ten great primal laws. He had heard the whole earth tremble in reply, as it were, to this manifestation of the majesty and power of God, and by that trembling give assent to the righteousness of His laws.

We know that Moses felt the awfulness of Mount Sinai just as much as the people, we know that he physically trembled, for we read in the book of Hebrews, Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But Moses differed from the people because he was filled with the Spirit of God, and was earnestly expecting a revelation of God, whereas they were possessed only by a selfish dread of calamity. Fear is of two kinds. There is an abject fear which springs out of an instinct of self-preservation. This is purely selfish, and produces an impulse to depart from the cause of fear; but there is another fear which is even more powerful, and which springs from love and desire of approach rather than from an impulse of self-preservation and which ought to be known as awe and not as fear. Thus, a child may intensely love and reverence his parents, and yet that feeling of reverence may be so strong that it may have in it an element of awe; a pupil may love and at the same time may have a feeling of fear and of reverence towards his teacher; a servant of God is drawn by a far stronger spirit of reverence towards His Master, a reverence in which love is mingled with awe. It is not fear. "There is no fear in love, because perfect love casteth out fear." But there is awe, a sensation akin to fear, and wrongly called by the same name. This awe was the fear of Moses. He trembled, for he knew better than the Israelites the secrets of his own heart, the depth of his own sin and weakness. He trembled for them also, for he knew their sin and weakness, and he knew their inability to keep the law delivered to them. Thus we see that the

feeling of awe drew him closer to God ; because, although he knew the hatred of God against sin, he knew that the love of God was greater for the sinner than even that hatred of sin. This explains why, although he trembled, he could turn to the people and bid them fear not, he could tell them that the approach of God was an act of love to separate them from their sin, and he sought to draw them near with awe and love.

The Delivery of the Book of the Law.

Whilst the people stood afar off, Moses drew near into the thick darkness where God was revealed. His intense desire for the presence of God prevailed over his fear.

As we read the story of his later life we learn how this desire for God grew stronger and stronger until it found expression in his passionate prayer that he might see God before he died. This was the impulse which enabled him at this time to draw near and to speak to God, and to receive from Him the further declaration of His will. This further declaration has been called the delivery of the Book of the Law. The Ten Commandments were to be engraven upon stone, whereas the commandments now about to be given were to be written in a book. The first were permanent, they were the foundation of the moral and spiritual life of the world, not only as it then was, but for all time ; whereas the code of laws which Moses was about to receive, although it contained teaching beneficial to all mankind, was the foundation of the nation of Israel as a theocracy. They were the code of laws which God gave Israel when He called them out and formed them into a separate nation. They were, therefore, suited rather to the condition of Israel than to the condition of the world around them. These laws are true and just, and breathe a divine spirit ; love and mercy are mingled with justice in them, but they do not contain a full revelation of God's later will to man. This was given by Christ when He revealed the perfect law of love.

THE BOOK OF THE LESSER LAW.

The Law of Worship.

The Twenty-third chapter of Exodus contains the summing up of this Book of the Lesser Law. In considering this chapter it is well to take it in conjunction with a summary of some of the laws given in the preceding chapters. We notice, in the first place, that, like the first words, this law also opens with a declaration of the nature of God. God is a Spirit, He has spoken to Israel. There are to be no idols of silver or gold, and if Israel makes an altar it is to be one of earth, not of stone, lest men should be drawn towards the altar instead of lifting up their eyes to God.

The Rights of Person.

Slavery is not abolished, because the condition of the world was not then ready for the change, but the sting of it is taken away. The person of the slave is protected. If he is injured his master is to be punished; if he dies, payment is to be made. His slavery is not for life; he may go free at the end of seven years. Should the jubilee year happen during that period, he is at once to be set free, and his term of slavery shortened. Again, the slave is treated not as a chattel, but as a human being. It is recognized that his service may be one of love, and he is allowed, if he wishes it, to dedicate himself to his master for life. Humane laws are also given as to his rights over wife and children.

The Rights of Property.

We are apt to think of this portion of the law of Moses as one of cold, hard justice—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,—somewhat akin to the code of Khammu-rabi though even that has an element of mercy in it. Stern justice is called for on the part of the State when punishing the individual, but mercy is called for in the individual dealings between man and man. Thus, we read that circumstances are always to be taken into account. If there are any

extenuating circumstances, thus, for instance, if a man kills a thief when he is stealing, restitution for the shedding of blood must be made if the injury is done in the day time whereas in the night time it may be passed over. Again, the money-lender is not to demand the terms of the ordinary usurer; if a neighbour's garment has been taken in pledge, the man must return it at night unless he is satisfied that his debtor has no need of it. There are special directions given as to returning cattle which have strayed into neighbouring property, or a fire which has consumed a neighbour's stacks of corn. Careful directions are given as to things lost when they have been placed in another's keeping, and also as to things borrowed.

Throughout the law we are reminded that a cry of distress, of want, or of pain, rises instantly to the ear of God, and that at the cry, either of the fatherless or of the widow, the wrath of God waxes hot.

Of Justice, of Charitableness.

Justice is to be maintained without partiality. A judge may not receive a gift lest it should blind his eyes, that is to say, consciously or unconsciously bias his judgment. The rights of the poor man are to be protected, and judgment is not to be given against a poor man because he is poor. At the same time, favour is not to be shown to a poor man just because he is poor; that is to say, we are not to follow the tendency of to-day, which is to take up the case of the poor man, and be biased towards him on account of his poverty instead of looking at the justice of the case.

A spirit of love towards our enemies is inculcated. If we know that harm is about to happen to one of our enemies, though it comes through no fault of our own, we are not to stand on one side and simply abstain from adding to his injury, but we are to do our utmost to remove that injury, and to help him. If we see his ass going astray we are to bring it back. If we see his ass bending under its burden, because it is over-weighted, we are not to forbear to help him.

Of False Witness.

The Ninth Commandment had forbidden a man to bear false witness against his neighbour, this Book of the Law forbids a man to raise a false report, and also forbids him to put his hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. He is not to follow the multitude to do evil, nor will the excuse be taken that others also are wresting judgment.

Of the Stranger and the Poor of the Land.

Lastly come words of tender consideration for the stranger and for the poor of the land, which show that we are not called upon so much to exercise justice as to exercise individual consideration, sympathy, and understanding; we are to see that all around us, even our enemy, the stranger, are cared for in our midst. The Sabbath is to be enforced not only for the sake of the Israelites, but in order that the cattle may rest and that the stranger and the slave may be refreshed.

Every seventh year, for the sake of the country, there is to be a year of rest, and the land is to lie fallow. This enactment is made not only for the sake of the country, but also for the sake of the poor of the land, that they too may have their share of the produce of the land. Every seventh year the land will be theirs, and they may gather in the fields, in the vineyard, in the olive yard, that which groweth of itself.

The Institution of the Feasts.

After the laws teaching the responsibility of man to man certain regulations are given as to the privilege of personal approach to God. Three times in a year every male is to appear in the presence of God, and to come before Him with rejoicing. The first feast looks backwards to the deliverance from Egypt and forwards to the deliverance to be wrought by Christ, that is to say, the leading idea is the separation from sin as represented by the unleavened bread.

The other two feasts—the Feast of Harvests and of the ingathering and the Feast of Tabernacles—belong to the present and to the future. They are the feasts of rejoicing

for God's mercy as year by year the harvest is given. They are also feasts of looking forward to the final in-gathering in the Kingdom of God.

The Angel of God's Presence.

The Israelites have been given a vision of God upon Mount Sinai in which "a fiery stream devoured before Him and cloud and tempest veiled His form." This manifestation had been necessary in order that they should understand something of the holiness and majesty of God. But Moses is told that God will be revealed to Israel not only as a Spirit, but also as a Presence among the Israelites, and that in the form of an angel He will appear to them as their Captain and their Guide.

Before this time God had appeared to man at various times in human similitude, to Abraham, to Lot, and to others.

As the Israelites make their journey across the wilderness and into the land of Canaan His presence will be with them as an Angel, sometimes visible, as to Joshua, who at the walls of Jericho looked up and saw a man over against him his sword drawn in his hand; sometimes invisible, when from time to time this power would be felt, and cities and armies would fall before the victorious host.

The Angel of the Presence would go before the host to keep them in the way and bring them into the land of Canaan. From Him would come blessing upon them and upon all that pertained to them. They would be preserved from sickness, and would strike terror into their enemies. This dread would cause their enemies to turn the one against the other, and would thus prepare an entrance for them into the land, so that gradually, little by little, as they were able to take possession, they would gain control over the land of their inheritance.

The promise is accompanied by warning. On their side there must be absolute obedience and trust in God, they must not turn back towards the idols of the country whence they have come out, nor must they contaminate themselves with the sins of the inhabitants in the country into which they are about to enter.

LESSON XXIII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COVENANT BETWEEN THE ISRAELITES AND GOD.

“All the words which the Lord hath said we will do.”

God's will had been declared to the people, but they were oppressed by the consciousness of sin. How could they appear in the presence of God; how could God approach sinful man? Israel, as a nation, might be willing to accept the marvellous offer of salvation which had been made to them; but if they could not come near Mount Sinai, how could they come, as it were, into His very presence? The answer to this question is given in the wonderful story of the 24th chapter of Exodus, a chapter full of interest and of warning. In it we find the first definite covenant made between Israel and God. God had before this time given promises to man, such as to Noah after the flood, to Abraham when wandering in the land of Canaan, to the nation of Israel in the land of Egypt, and these promises had been accepted with thankfulness and joy; they had bowed the head and worshipped. But in this chapter a further step is taken, and Israel as a nation enters into spiritual covenant with God and is accepted by God. It is an anticipation of the time when the whole world will acknowledge Christ, and be accepted through Him.

After Moses had descended from the Mount he gathered the people together and read to them the Book of the Law.

Before a covenant can be made there must be an intelligent understanding of what is contained in it, and therefore Moses told the people all the words of the law and all the judgments. When these had been read in their hearing they answered, "All the words which the Lord hath said we will do." The promise of salvation and help being put before them, they thought only of the goodness of God, and without knowing or understanding their own weakness they readily promised to do that which they afterwards failed to perform. Their promise reads sadly when we know that every lip save two out of those who promised would perish in the wilderness, but at the moment they were, no doubt, in earnest in what they said, and ready to enter into covenant with God. This broken covenant formed a dark background to subsequent Jewish history until it was illuminated by the promise of a new covenant, a covenant as instinct with life as the old covenant had been with death, a covenant accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit. This hope was emphasized by all the prophets (Isaiah lv. 3, Jeremiah xxxi. 31, 33); it formed the consummation of the great vision of the future to Ezekiel (xxxvii. 26), and to it the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews turned (Hebrews xxxi. 16) in the face of the impending overthrow of Jerusalem. "I will make a new covenant with them. . . . I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

The Ceremony of the Covenant.

When the words of God's promise had been written down, Moses rose early in the morning and built an altar, surrounding it with twelve pillars, each pillar being intended to represent one of the twelve tribes. Then having chosen young men as representatives of the priesthood, he sent them to offer burnt sacrifices and peace offerings upon the twelve pillars, the burnt offerings typifying the whole-hearted surrender of the people; the peace offering typifying the acceptance by God of these offerings, and a communion of peace between God and man.

We can almost see the strange scene. The great mountain of Sinai towering in the background, glowing with fire and overhung with a thick darkness; below, upon the plain, the representatives of the people, awe-struck and silent, while Moses sets up the rude altar and pillars, and offers upon them the sacrifice of the animals which have been slaughtered. Then approaching the altar he puts half the blood in the basins and sprinkles the other half on the altar. By this act he shows how the Israelites could approach God and be in safety, just as of old by the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts in Egypt, they had been in safety although the avenging angel had passed through the land. The blood sprinkled either upon the door-post or upon the altar was the symbol of a life given for a life, and prefigured the life of Christ given upon the Cross for us. "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28).

In order to understand this scene it is best to read with it the account which is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We find there that Moses laid the book upon the altar in order to signify the acceptance of their acts, through the mediation of the blood shed for them, then taking the other half of the blood he probably swung it upon the pillars surrounding the altar, and sprinkled the people, and thus united all in one common covenant, signed and sealed with blood.

The Ascent into the Mount of God.

Thus having entered into covenant with God, being purified and accepted by Him, Moses and Aaron, accompanied by Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of the people went up into the mountain, entering into the great cloud which overhung it, and there beheld a vision of the great God. What they saw, how far in very deed they saw God, we cannot tell, but we do know that mortal man cannot see God and live. From what is recorded they seem to have had a vision of the glory of God. We look up at the sky and say that we see

the stars and the universe of Heaven, but we can form only a faint idea of its vast expanse. We gather some slight conception of the glory of the sun, of the planets and worlds which exist in space beyond us. It was in this way, perhaps, that Moses and the elders saw God. Nothing has come down to us of what they saw, beyond the glimpse of the paved work beneath the feet of God, that, we read, was exquisite in beauty and of a sapphire blue, as impossible for us to imagine as it was impossible for Moses to describe. The language of earth always stammers and falls short when it attempts to describe the glory of Heaven.

When the elders had seen the vision they were permitted to draw near to God and to eat and drink in His presence. They took part in a sacrificial feast, a type of the Great Marriage Feast of the hereafter (Revelation xix. 9), when the Church, purified in the robes which have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, will, like these elders of Israel, draw near and take part in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The vision and that which it signifies are beyond us; but the glad lesson which it contains lies well within our reach. It tells us of a way of approach being open to God through the blood of the Lamb, just as a way of approach was opened to the Israelites through the sacrifices which Moses offered. A vision of God is granted even on earth to His servants just as a vision was granted to the elders of Israel, for Christ has promised "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The hope of rejoicing in the presence of God is before us in fuller measure than was vouchsafed to them, for those who see God on earth will be called to take part in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

LESSON XXIV.

INTRODUCTORY LESSON TO CHAPTER XXV.

“I WILL DWELL AMONG THEM.”

A Contrast between the Latter Chapters of Exodus and those which had gone before.

The latter part of the book of Exodus seems strangely different from the book of Genesis and the earlier portions of Exodus. It seems to be written in a different strain and to be upon a different level. The book of Genesis and the earlier parts of Exodus had told us of God as a Creator, of the creation of the world, of His providence, and of His dealings with the individual and the national life of man. We read the story of the early saints of God, of their conflict with sin and with the world around them. We read of the forming of a great nation and its emancipation from the world-power, that is to say, from Egypt; of the meeting of that nation with God in the wilderness, and the giving of the ten laws which were to be the foundation of the moral and spiritual life and welfare, not only of that nation, but of the whole world. Suddenly all changes, and we have about ten chapters filled with nothing but descriptions of the building of the tabernacle and the ark and other furniture within it. We read about boards and curtains, about basins and shovels. Why should this be? If what was so vast as the creation of the world occupied only two chapters of the Bible, why should God have given such elaborate directions as to the making of one

small tabernacle? and this tabernacle itself seems to have been only transitory, and preparatory to the temple which was to be founded in Jerusalem. If so, was it not a matter which concerned the Jews only? Why should there be lessons for all time to be learned from it?

The Reason why elaborate Directions were given.

When God created the world He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast, that is to say, the forces of nature responded spontaneously to the will of their Creator; but when God commanded man to be the maker of the tabernacle and to carry out His will, the work was done slowly and with effort. In other words, God commands and His will is realized, because He is infinite in wisdom and in power; but when He commands through man He wills through what is finite and imperfect, and, therefore, His will is carried out with limitations, and only by means of minute commands and directions. Hence the contrast between the first chapter of Genesis and the latter chapters of Exodus is really one between the work of the Creator and the work of the divinely directed creature.

The exact Directions as to the Tabernacle.

Why should the tabernacle have been made according to so exact a pattern; why should God have declared His will in matters so minute as those we find in these chapters? The answer seems to be that it is in accordance with the general working of God's creation, that not only the grand outline of what is created should be exactly determined, but also the detail in every particular. We find in the creation of the smallest plants or first forms of animal life, as much exactitude, as much beauty and design, as much adaptability to the conditions of the being of the particular plant or animal as we find in the creation of man. In God's creation nothing is without design, and everything shows the thought-out purpose of the Creator. Countless illustrations of this can be found

in the world of nature. Every bird, insect, and plant is admirably adapted to its environment, even the form in many cases changing with the varying conditions.

God willed that in the construction of the tabernacle there should be a unity of purpose and detail, a beauty of completion, as nearly resembling the work of His own creation of the world as might be carried out through the instrumentality of man.

The Reason for the Construction of the Tabernacle.

We next wonder why the tabernacle was necessary. Man might make it as beautifully and accurately as he would, but could it contain the presence of God Himself? Would God indeed dwell with man? We have seen God at intervals speaking to His servants. We have seen Him arise in judgment or in mercy. We have seen occasional manifestations of His presence, as in the burning bush, the cloud and fire that led the Israelites, above all, in the cloud upon Mount Sinai.

It seems such a strange transition from Mount Sinai, on which the Lord descended in fire, and from which the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, to a tabernacle built by man and carried about by him wherever he journeyed. When we look more carefully at the way in which God was gradually drawing man towards Himself, we see that there is unity of purpose also in this, even although the transition from Mount Sinai to the tabernacle may seem to be a sudden one. God had been gradually drawing man nearer to Him and letting His presence abide more continually around him. The cloud and the fire had been constant by day and by night; the people when sojourning around the mountain were comforted by the emblems of the fire and of the smoke; but now they were about to take a journey through a land unknown. They would need a sense of God's perpetual presence, and, therefore, just as the mountain had been set apart and fenced around because it was holy, so the tabernacle was to be a sacred centre

in their very midst, and the ark within it as sacred as the mountain. If man approached the ark and touched it with irreverent hand he would be punished by death, just as surely as if he had broken through the bounds and touched the mountain. This presence of God in the tabernacle was to lead men forward to the presence of God in the temple at Jerusalem, and to point still further forward to the incarnation of Christ, very God and very man, and yet further forward again to the dwelling of God's Spirit in the hearts of His people.

Why should the Tabernacle have been Built so accurately and with such elaborate detail?

Many answers can be given to this question. That there was a reason for it we can see, because the temple at Jerusalem was as carefully ordained in every particular as the tabernacle in the desert. Each was to be as perfect as the hand of man could make it. Some have thought that it may have been because the tabernacle was to contain the presence of God, and because it foreshadowed the coming of the God-Man, in whom every thought, word, and action was to be without blemish and without spot. As Moses was bidden to make all things according to the pattern revealed to him in the mount, so the Christian is to form his life according to the pattern of Christ. By the power of God's indwelling Spirit he is to fashion his thought and life, in small things as well as great, as carefully and as exactly as the pattern of the tabernacle was carried out. It was again a dim and first figure of the future city of God, the New Jerusalem.

The Tabernacle was full of Teaching for the Israelites. Has it Teaching for the Christian also?

This question will answer itself as we study the tabernacle and all that it contained in detail. It is enough for the present to remember that the Israelites were a child-race, and were receiving teaching from God, line upon line, here a little and there a little. Sometimes God

spoke, sometimes He taught by miracle or by the direct intervention of His power to help or to protect His people. Here He taught by symbols or object-lessons which would always be present in the midst of the people wherever they went, or later, when the temple was built in the heart of the nation at Jerusalem. Men might apprehend the truths which were implied, and as they pondered them the teaching of God's Spirit might reveal to them their full significance ; others, doubtless, and these the great multitude of the Jews, might pass them by and learn little or nothing from them. Some might understand and believe the lessons which were there given to them, some might believe them not. But whatever the case might be with the Jews, to us they have a fuller light and meaning, because we know and see how the various types have been fulfilled in Christ. We can learn much as to the truths which are thus taught, because being visible they are more within the comprehension of our finite intelligence. The teaching given to a child-nation represents to us, as well as to them, the deep things of God in simple form. Things hidden to our wisdom and prudence are understood when they are revealed to us as babes.

When we take these thoughts into consideration we read these pages in a new light, and the twenty-fifth chapter becomes full of interest and of symbolical teaching. It is impossible either in this chapter or in those that follow to work out fully all the teaching contained in these types. We can only take those which lie more immediately on the surface, and which are comparatively self-evident.

LESSON XXV.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XXV.

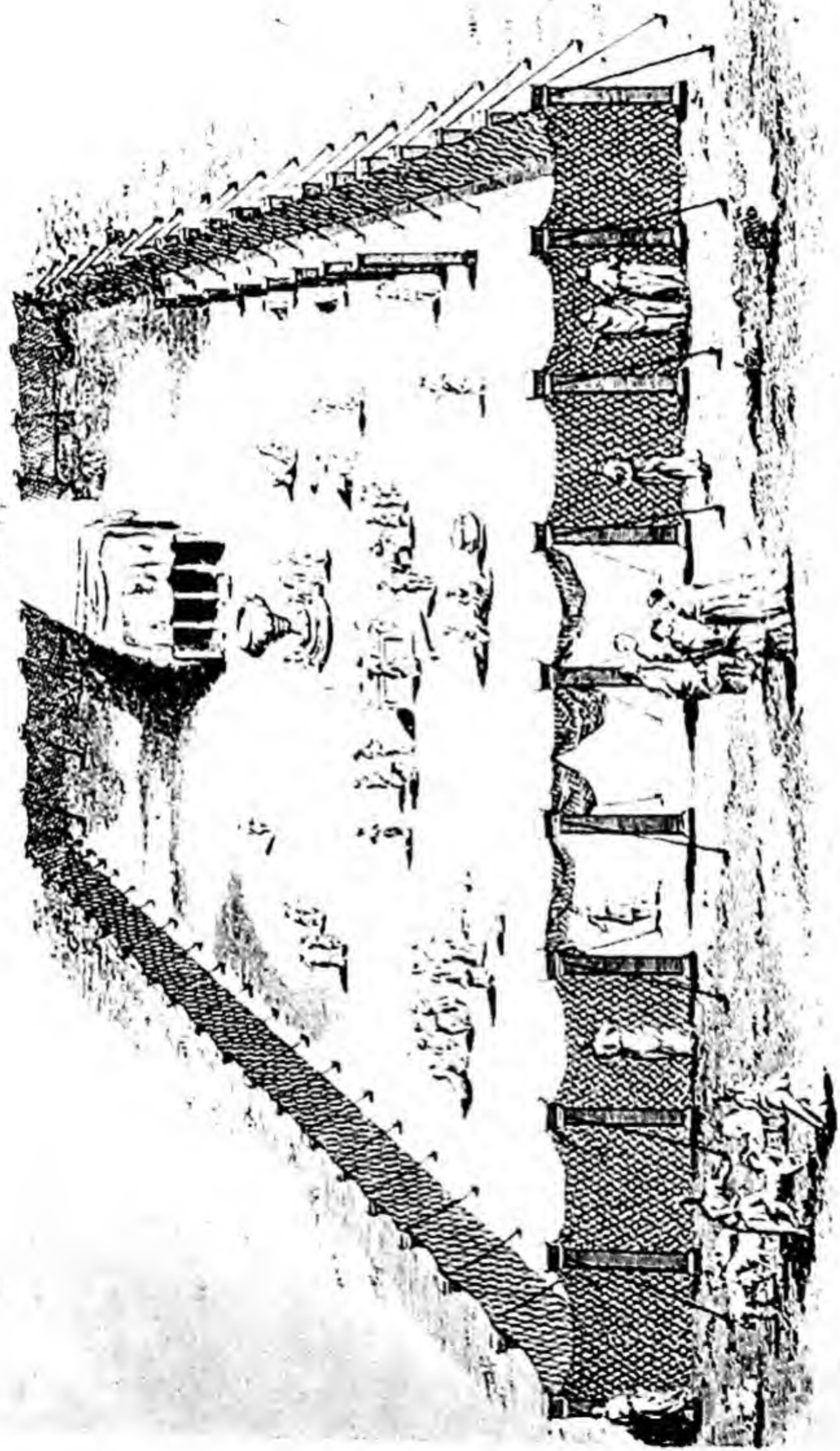
THE TENT OF MEETING BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

An Outline Sketch of the Tabernacle.

Before considering the tabernacle in detail it is best to anticipate a little in order to gain an idea of its construction and proportions. It consisted of a quadrangle 100 cubits long by 50 broad. It is sufficient for all general purposes to take the cubit as measuring $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet. This quadrangle was formed by posts standing 5 cubits apart from one another, and supported as any ordinary tent by ropes and pegs driven into the ground. On these posts were hung white linen curtains, except at the eastern side, at the door of entrance, of which the curtains were of purple and blue and scarlet. The posts were 5 cubits high, that is to say, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot above the height of a man, so that the whole quadrangle was screened from view.

There was a brazen altar $22\frac{1}{2}$ cubits, about $22\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the east end and standing in the centre of the court. Another $22\frac{1}{2}$ cubits further forward we find the brazen laver, and 10 cubits beyond that the priest's court.

The priest's court or tabernacle proper consisted of a portable erection, half-building, half-tent. It was 30 cubits long by 10 cubits wide and 10 cubits high. It thus stood twice as high as the curtains of the outer court, and could be seen from a long distance without. The boards of which it consisted were made of acacia wood, which were fastened



THE TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS.

into sockets of silver and joined across the top by brass rods. This tabernacle was protected by four coverings:

1. Curtains of embroidered linen.
2. Curtains of goats' hair.
3. Curtains of rams' skins dyed red.
4. Above all a rough covering of seals' skins.

The tabernacle was divided into two courts. The first 20 feet by 10 feet was called the priest's court, and contained the table of shew bread, the candlestick, and the altar of incense.

This was divided by an embroidered curtain from the most holy place. The most holy place was a court 10 feet long by 10 feet wide, entirely square. It contained the ark, and was entered by the high priest alone once a year. The ark was of oblong construction made of shittim wood, covered with gold and having above it a slab of pure gold as a lid or covering. This covering was called the mercy-seat, and overshadowing the mercy-seat were two cherubims of pure gold with outstretched wings, touching one another, and eyes bent towards the mercy-seat. The size of the ark was 3 feet 9 inches long by 2 feet 3 broad and deep. There were rings of gold in the sides of the ark, and staves of gold passed through them by which it was carried.

A First Appeal for Contributions.

We are accustomed in every newspaper to see appeal after appeal for subscriptions and help of various kinds. It is strange to read over the first recorded appeal or call to man to give offerings for the service of God. They were to be of every kind. Some precious, as gold and onyx stones, some of small value, as brass and goats' hair, so that everyone could give according to his ability. What is emphasized is the spirit in which the offerings are to be given. "Of every man that giveth willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering."

The Construction of the Ark.

Clear directions are then given as to the construction of the ark. It is to be of shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold.

There are to be rings of gold in it and staves, showing that the ark is not to be touched by human hand—a lesson of reverence and a reminder to man of his natural sinfulness which forms a line of separation dividing him from the holiness of God.

In the land of Egypt sacred boxes or arks had been in use in the idol temples. We notice all through the Bible that God teaches through things that are familiar to man, and sometimes takes what has been applied to idolatrous and sinful use and sanctifies it and takes it for Himself. Thus Jesus taught men through the every-day things around them, through the grain of mustard seed, through the penny of the Roman Empire. But though the ark might be similar in shape and construction to an idolatrous shrine, it was entirely different because of what it contained. The heart of an Egyptian ark contained some bestial form of the idol to whom the ark was dedicated, and this idol was usually half man, half beast. As such it was more degraded than either man or beast, and appealed to man's lower nature; it degraded the nobility of man and made it something lower even than the animal creation around him, and thus awakened all his baser instincts and passions.

The ark which Moses made contained the will of God as expressed in the two tablets of stone. Those ten laws were of exquisite beauty and purity, and would, if obeyed according to their spirit, place the soul of man in the right attitude towards God and towards his fellow-man. They would raise man above himself, upwards to God, and thus draw out all that was noblest and purest in his nature. This makes the contrast between the upward tendency and aspirations of the Israelitish worship, and the downward tendency of the idolatry of the nations around them, and probably of the ancient Semitic worship. Again, this expressed will of God was the centre of the tabernacle. From it radiated what it was essential for man to observe if he would approach God, if he would hold right intercourse with his fellow man. Like the exquisite colours of the rainbow shedding light over a dark and stormy world, the ten laws of God in the centre of the tent

of meeting between man and God and between man and man, radiated purity, light, and beauty, a purity, light, and beauty which have illuminated not only the hearts of the Israelites, but also the hearts of men throughout the whole Christian world.

The Mercy-Seat.

Above the ark, suspended by a slab of pure gold, was the mercy-seat, or place of propitiation. As the Israelite came up to worship God in the temple and looked towards the ark, he would know that there was within it the pot of manna and Aaron's rod which budded, typical of God's goodness to him, and of His acceptance of the priesthood of the Levites. He would know also that there were the ten laws of God; but whilst he knew all this he would also be conscious that he had not given back to God the love which His mercies called for, that he had broken that pure and holy will of God, and, therefore, neither joy nor gladness could be his portion. If this had been all he would only have drawn near with fear, shame, and remorse. But in the Holy of holies mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other.

Above the tables of testimony was the place of atonement or of propitiation, as the words "mercy-seat" might more literally be translated. The glory of God rested there, a glory full of love, mercy, and forgiveness, as well as of judgment, and an Israelite would be conscious that as surely as he had been ungrateful to God and sinned against Him, yet as surely there was atonement, mercy, and love ever present to pardon that sin.

The Cherubims of Gold.

On either side of the mercy-seat were the two cherubims, also of pure gold, with their faces towards the mercy-seat. Some have thought that this was a figure of the Redeemer or of the redeemed. There is another thought which is perhaps as beautiful. These cherubims may represent the attitude of the angelic host towards man. They ever

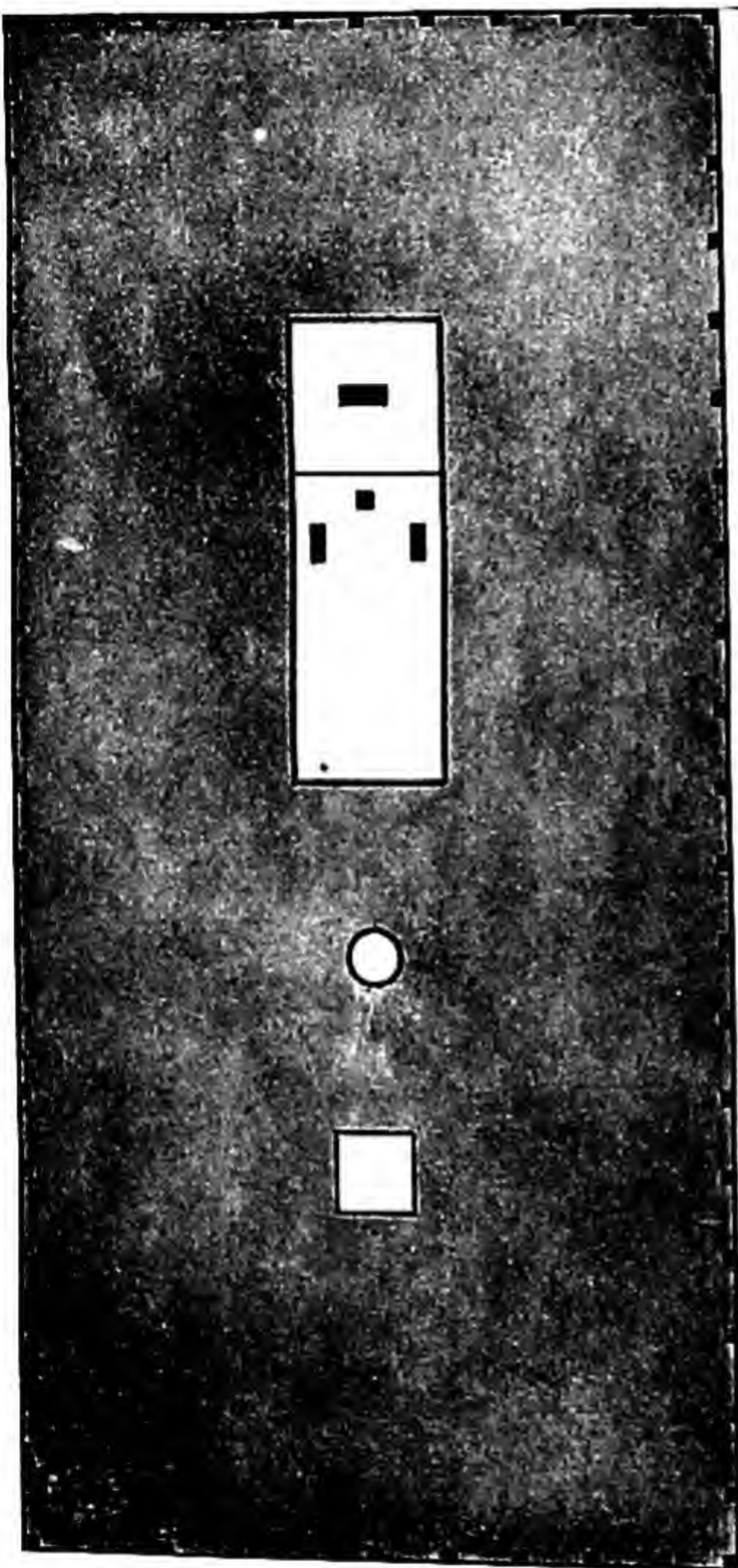
behold the face of God. They ever look upon His goodness and His truth, just as the cherubims have their faces bent towards the ark containing God's law and the symbols of His mercy, but here also their eyes are bent not only upon the truth of God, but also upon His mercy-seat. We know that there is joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth, and these figures of the cherubims remind us of the joy in Heaven at the birth of Christ, when the angel choir broke through the Heavens and burst into song, because through the mercy of God there was peace on earth, good-will towards man, that is to say, God's perfect law and His mercy to man united. This mercy-seat, this union of Heaven and earth, was to be the place in which God would commune with Moses, and from which He would give His commands concerning the children of Israel.

The Bread of the Presence.

Besides the ark, directions are given in this chapter for the making of the table of shew bread, and for the candlestick of pure gold. The table of shew bread, or translated more literally, "bread of the presence," was to be always before God. It consisted of a table on which six flat cakes of bread were at one end and six at the other, and above each pile of bread was an offering of frankincense.

This bread of the presence had various significations. It represented the fruit of the year's toil, the seed sown, the ripened grain, the bread made from it, and as such represented the offering of the activity or whole work of the Israelites to God. It pointed out that the trend of all our work, no matter how homely it may be, should be God-ward, and should be brought before God to be tested and accepted by Him, so that His blessing might rest upon it.

The bread spread out in the presence of God typified that all work was done before the eye of God, and the frankincense upon it typified the prayer which consecrated



ARK



ALTAR OF INCENSE



GOLDEN CANDLESTICK



TABLE OF SHEWBREAD



CURTAIN WALL
OF COURT

PLAN OF THE TABERNACLE, AND FURNITURE.

Facing p. 158.

it, and through which the life-work was offered up to God.

We may carry the type further, and we may see in it the bringing of all activity to God—the activity of the mind and of the spirit, the works of righteousness which for His sake we try to do day by day, and which we bring into His presence with the incense of prayer upon them.

The Candlestick of Pure Gold.

The next direction is as to the candlestick of pure gold. The form of this could never be exactly determined, until the brazen gates of Titus were discovered in the conqueror's arch at Rome. It was literally rather a stand for lamps than a candlestick, a seven-branched stand, and on each branch a bowl of oil was to be placed containing a burning wick. These lamps were to be fed daily with pure olive oil.

As the table of shew bread typified the offering of the activity of life, the candlestick typified the offering of the spiritual life. This lamp burned all night in the centre of the camp of Israel. There was darkness and a waste of wilderness all round, but throughout the stillness of the night the lamp of God shone out with light and hope. The number of branches was seven, typifying the perfect number, or the light of every individual. It is not only one great light or the light of the Church as a whole, it is also a gathering together of many lights, many lamps or members of Churches. The power of the one lamp or of the individual may be great or small, but each man according to his power is to shine forth, so that men may see his good works and glorify his Father in Heaven. Some of us may not be able to do as much as others, but each one can, if fed daily by the Spirit of God, give forth Christ-like words and acts, so that man may see reflected in them the light of Christ's life, and by this reflection bring a dayspring of new light upon earth, to shine more and more unto the perfect day.

"I will dwell in the midst."

The whole chapter is summed up with the direction that all is to be made according to the pattern on the mount. Moses upon the Mount of God had seen the vision of the tabernacle in which God was about to sojourn with men, in which He would dwell among them and guide them as they journeyed from place to place, just as Christ dwelt among His disciples and passed with them from city to city. The tabernacle would fall far short of the vision of glory that Moses had seen, just as our lives fall far short of the vision of the life of Christ which is recorded for us.

There is a further thought. Moses saw the vision of the tabernacle just as John saw the vision of the New Jerusalem. There are some points of resemblance between the tabernacle in the wilderness and the city of the New Jerusalem. In either the glory of God rests upon the mercy seat; but in the one it was only for a time, whilst in the other it will endure for ever. Into the one, only the Israelite entered; into the other, the nations of them that are saved have access, and they will walk in the light of it.

"God is a Spirit."

These are some of the thoughts which come to us in connection with the tabernacle as we see it in the light of New Testament teaching. We have to notice that it was not so full of meaning or of vision to the Israelite who worshipped in it. These thoughts could only be realized by him dimly and in part. Certain things, however, he would see. He would understand that as there was one ark, one mercy-seat, so there was one God, and that that God was a Spirit to be worshipped as a Spirit. When Pompey, full of curiosity, entered the temple in the later Jewish history, nothing disappointed him so much as the emptiness of the temple. To him there was no meaning in it because he knew nothing of the fulness of God which rested upon it. The Jew, however, knew, both from the traditions of his fathers and from what he had himself seen, that this emptiness was the

token of a Spiritual Presence, of a glory and majesty of which he had seen and heard. The tabernacle was to him a dwelling-place, a home of refuge in the desert, just as the temple afterwards was to the whole Jewish race a pavilion for the time of trouble, a sacred tabernacle in which to hide, a place to dwell in all the days of his life, to behold "the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple." Little wonder that when Jesus wanted to appeal to the hearts of the people He drew towards Himself all the life and light of the tabernacle, and showed them how it was bound up in Him. We can understand how His words would ring home to the heart of every Jew, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and I will give you rest." "I am the Bread of Life"; "I am the Light of the world."

LESSON XXVI.

EXODUS, CHAPTERS XXVI. AND XXVII.

THE VISION IN THE MOUNT.

THE two following chapters contain directions as to the construction of the tabernacle in all its parts. Those who stood in the plain below Mount Sinai and gazed up at its vast mountainous range, now more majestic than ever in its rugged grandeur, for the glory of God was resting upon it, must have wondered as they looked down at the preparations which were being made for the tabernacle—Mount Sinai so majestic, the tabernacle so small and insignificant.

A mighty oak or cedar is far more magnificent than the tiny flower growing at its base, and yet that flower is nearer to the glory of God as seen in the cedar tree than the tabernacle to Mount Sinai, for tree and flower alike are the handiwork of God. The tabernacle, although made according to the direction of God, and carried out with all the care which Moses and the Israelites could give to it, was after all but the handiwork of man, and lacked the exquisite symmetry and perfection of the works of God's creation. Nevertheless, in the very care and exactness of its construction, it had a lesson for man; it taught him that all his works should reflect as far as possible the beauty and perfection of the work of God's creation.

The Outer Court.

The exact details as to the construction of the tabernacle have been described in the preceding chapters, and, therefore,

it is not necessary to do more than give a general idea of the impression which it would make upon the worshipper who approached it. He would see a quadrangle 150 feet long by 75 feet broad, surrounded by white linen curtains supported on pillars, and would enter at the eastern gate through curtains of fine linen, red and white and blue. As he entered in he would see at the farther end of the quadrangle the tabernacle itself, shrouded by its outer covering of rams' skins dyed red, with the dark arch of sealskin protecting it above from wind and rain. In contrast to the dark colour would be the golden boards; and if the curtains in front of the tabernacle were drawn he would see the golden vista within, lit up, as the evening time approached, with the lights from the golden candlestick.

The Brazen Altar.

But before approaching the tabernacle his eye would fall upon the great brazen altar. This consisted of a mound of earth, covered with wood and with brass, square in form and hollow, with rings in the sides, and long staves to carry it. It was said also to have had a sloping ascent, up which the priests went when they were performing sacrifices. At each corner of the brazen altar was a horn, typical of power and also of mercy; for the horns of the altar were the place of refuge, and the sinner, when escaping from his pursuers, would flee to the tabernacle, and grasping a horn of the altar for a time at any rate be safe from his pursuers. 1 Kings ii. 28-34: "And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." These horns were strongly made, as the animals who were about to be sacrificed were bound to them in order that they might not escape. This explains the reference which David makes in the Psalms when he prays, "bind the sacrifice with cords, yea, even unto the horns of the altar." His exclamation seems intended to form part of an outburst of song from a chorus of priests who stand at the foot of the altar to welcome the procession just entering the court, accompanied by the animals doomed to sacrifice. The chorus summons the procession to draw near, and assures

the suppliants of God's blessing upon them. Goulburn gives a special meaning to these words when he says that this Psalm was the hymn sung by our Lord and His Apostles immediately before the scene in Gethsemane.

The altar was of brass and not of gold, probably on account of the number of sacrifices which were to be performed upon it, and all the vessels which accompanied it were also of brass. It was the first object which met the eye of the worshipper as he entered the court, and reminded him that the approach to God was through the sacrifice for sin.

The Laver.

Midway between the brazen altar and the tabernacle stood the great laver for the cleansing of the priests. This laver was of special interest, for it was made out of the looking-glasses or brazen mirrors which had been brought by the women out of Egypt, and which had been given by them for the service of the Temple. Mirrors of this description which have been found in Egypt can still be seen in the British Museum. There is another thought which is of interest to us. Before the mirrors were melted down and made into the laver, they could only show those who looked into them their need of cleansing, but when they were melted down and made into the laver they could show by their reflection both the need of cleansing, and also hold the water by which the worshipper could be cleansed. This illustrates the difference between the giving of the commandments upon Mount Sinai and the death of Christ upon the Cross. The law of Moses could show the sinner how far he was from the perfect law of God; the blood of Christ could cleanse and release him from the power of his sin.

As generation after generation of women approached the court of the tabernacle and were told the story of the great laver and how it was made, they must have rejoiced to think that those who came before them had denied themselves for the sake of the tabernacle, and had dedicated to the service of God those very instruments which once ministered to their human vanity.



BRAZEN LAVER.

Facing p. 164.

The Tabernacle itself, its Boards and its Sockets.

The tabernacle consisted of a building 75 feet long by 15 feet broad, and was divided into two parts—the outer court for the use of the priests, the inner court, the Holy of Holies, containing the ark.

It was constructed of boards, covered with gold, and these boards were fastened on pillars also covered with gold and set in sockets of silver, each socket weighing 45 pounds. These sockets were constructed from the ransom money which each Israelite had to give as a redemption for his soul; this ransom money equalled about eighteen pence in English money, or thirty cents, and was given by the Israelites in order that they might be numbered among the consecrated people. All were alike slaves of sin, and had to be bought back from slavery, and, therefore, all must pay before being admitted among the chosen people. Secondly, a like payment had to be made for rich and poor, because all were equal before God, for "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The question of tribute money was once raised in the Gospels when a demand was made upon Christ to pay the tribute money. As Peter was about to speak to Him, Jesus anticipated him, and asked, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children or of strangers?" and Peter replied "of strangers." Jesus said, "then are the children free"; but lest there should be any misconception in the mind of Peter He ordained that the money should be procured in a miraculous manner, showing Peter that He was King and Lord of all, of nature, and even of the very fish of the sea, for He had Peter cast a hook into the sea and take a piece of money out of the mouth of the first fish that came up, and with it pay the tribute money for Himself as well as for Peter. Christ, the Son of God, was Lord of His Father's house; it was His by right, but for the moment He waived this right, and in order that He might be left

free to continue His works of mercy, paid the ransom money, and whilst paying it of His mercy included Peter also in the same payment, thus permitting Himself to be numbered among the transgressors.

The Inner Court of the Tabernacle.

The worshipper, unless he were a priest, could only approach the outside of the tabernacle. Here he would have to stand and in thought follow the priest as he passed by him into the inner court. This inner court contained the golden lamp, the table of shew bread, and the altar of incense.

The Altar of Incense.

The account of the altar of incense follows immediately after the consecration of the high priest and his sons, possibly because the most important duty of the high priest, next to entering once a year into the Holy of Holies, was that of attendance upon this altar. It was of gold, and stood between the lamp and the table of shew bread, possibly as a sign that the one which typified the activities of life, and the other which represented the shedding forth of the spiritual life, were alike dependent upon and consecrated by prayer. It stood immediately in front of the veil, so that the high priest might find ready the incense, some of which he was to take with him when he entered into the Holy of Holies. It stood ready also on his return, when it was part of his duty to sprinkle that altar with the blood which he had taken into and brought back from the holy place. From the position of the altar of incense immediately before the veil which separated the ark from the court of the tabernacle, the cloud of incense which was offered upon it passed into the Holy of Holies, typifying that the highest aspirations and prayers of the nation could penetrate beyond the veil and reach the mercy-seat, the throne of God. "That the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat" (Leviticus xvi. 13).

Every day the high priest carried into the tabernacle a censer or shovel full of burning coals which he laid upon the altar of incense, and upon which the incense was burned.



ALTAR OF INCENSE.

Facing p. 166.

The altar of incense was thus tended twice every day, and sent forth constantly a fragrant odour.

The cloud of incense which arose when the altar of incense was tended before the veil was a type of active prayer; the incense which arose constantly, both day and night, the attitude of the soul when it was stayed upon God. A thought akin to this constant glow of incense is beautifully expressed by Arnold in the prayer which he used every day before going into school:

" . . . that as through Thy natural laws my heart beats and my blood flows without any thought of mine for them, so my spiritual life may hold on its course at those times when my mind cannot consciously turn to Thee to commit each particular thought to Thy service."

The altar of incense was sprinkled once a year, showing that everything needs cleansing, and that even our prayers, our holiest aspirations, are mingled with sin.

The high priest and the nation, as represented by the high priest, never approached so close to God as when ministering at the altar of incense, and the cloud of the incense from their ministry penetrated even into the Holiest of Holies. The fragrance of a rose is the essence of the life of the flower, so the prayer of the high priest, and through the high priest of the nation, as represented by the incense, was the outcome of the deepest, the most consecrated depth of his nature. The yearning of his soul satisfied itself only as it ascended into the presence of God. "Let my prayer be set forth as incense, and the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice" (Psalm cxli. 2).

THE CURTAINS OF THE INNER COURT.

The Veil of Separation.

The veil of the tabernacle was a curtain of special beauty enriched with figures of cherubims. In the temple the veil, which was 60 feet long and 30 feet wide, and as thick as the palm of a man's hand, separated the two courts. Josephus tells us that the curtain of the temple was of Babylonian texture, and made of blue, white, scarlet, and purple,

representing the universe in its four elements. It was this latter veil which was rent from the top to the bottom ; that is to say, by the power of God, not by the power of man, when Christ was crucified. This rending of the veil took place just at the time when the evening sacrifice was being offered in the temple, and the priest, according to the law, burning incense in the holy place and the people praying without. The rending of the veil betokened that Christ, the High Priest of His people, had passed into the presence of His Father and was there presenting the atonement He had made for their sins. But during the whole of the Old Testament history the Holy of Holies was separated by the veil through which the high priest passed once a year as the mediator between God and man. This veil of separation has gone for ever, and man is no longer separated from God, "who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

LESSON XXVII.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HIGH PRIEST.

The Tribe to which the Priest belonged.

It seems strange that Aaron should have been chosen as high priest instead of Moses, and that the tribe of Levi, which was debarred from inheritance among the sons of Joseph on account of the sin of Levi, should have been chosen to minister in the holy place.

Many explanations have been given for this choice ; some have thought that if Moses had been appointed to this office the nation would have rested upon his greatness and his holiness rather than upon the High priesthood, but when Aaron was chosen they knew that he was a man of like passions to themselves, although chosen of God, and admitted by the cleansing blood into His presence, and allowed to minister before Him. A second reason was that if Moses had been chosen the Israelites might have been tempted to rest upon him instead of relying upon God. From time to time we see how careful Moses was to stand aside and to show that his power came from God and God only, not only when he was in the presence of Pharaoh, but also when he was leading the Israelites. Another circumstance which points to this view is that at his death he was buried "in a valley of Moab," and "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." He may have been buried in this way in order to guard against a superstitious worship, lest that worship which the Israelites had not been allowed to offer

him during his life might have been rendered to him after he was dead. If Moses had been chosen as high priest the danger of this worship during his lifetime would have been very much greater, indeed, it might have been almost impossible to prevent it.

“The Law maketh Men High Priests which have Infirmary.”

This thought of a man of comparatively weak character being chosen comes out very forcibly when we remember that at the very time when Moses saw the vision of the high priest, his garments and his offices, Aaron was yielding to the sin of the people, and was making a golden calf for them. What a contrast there was between the vision which Moses saw in the mount of the high priest, and his office in the sanctuary, and Aaron yielding to the people, unable to stem the tide of their idolatry, and sanctioning idolatry by the calf which he had made. If God had a vision of the life of Aaron so much more glorious than the vision which Aaron had for himself, may He not also have a vision of the life of each one of us of a purity and glory far beyond what we imagine and of possibilities and opportunities unknown to us? How far are we letting His Spirit work within us so that that vision may be realized; how far are we conforming our lives according to the pattern revealed to us in His word?

The Garments of the High Priests.

The first thing that strikes us as we read the account of the garments of the priests is the contrast between their attitude and office in the temple and the accounts which have come down to us of rites performed by the priests in heathen temples. These rites usually consisted of wild and frenzied orgies, such as those which the priests of Baal performed on Mount Carmel, and were characterized by immorality and sin; whereas the directions which are given to Aaron and his sons are that they are to be decently clad in linen and to tread with reverence the courts of the tabernacle.

The distinguishing mark of the priests' garments was to



HIGH PRIEST, IN HIS ROBES.

Facing p. 170.

be the whiteness and purity of their linen, signifying their separation from sin, and the purity of their lives ; whereas the distinguishing mark of the high priest was that he was to wear "garments of glory and beauty," as the representative of Christ and of the nation, as the mediator between God and man.

The Coat of Embroidered Linen.

On the day of atonement the high priest was clothed in white from head to foot, because that was the day on which he was to enter into the holy place and to make atonement for sin. On that day his garments signified the putting away of sin, and the need of purity only. At other times when he was in attendance in the tabernacle his garments were symbolical of his duty and general offices for the people.

He was first to wear a garment of white linen, white and embroidered, reminding us of the fine linen, white and clean, in which the Lamb's wife is to be clothed, "for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

The Girdle.

This embroidered coat was bound together by a girdle of linen. The girdle is ever the sign of strength and of service. Christ, when He was teaching His disciples what their office was to be on earth, girt Himself with a girdle and washed their feet and ministered to them ; and St. John, in the Revelation, tells us that in his vision he saw Christ girt about with a golden girdle, walking to and fro amongst the candlesticks and ministering to His Church below. The Christian is bidden to have his loins girt about with truth. He is to stand ready for service, strong because he is the servant of the God of truth, that truth which will one day be established throughout the world.

The Robe of the Ephod.

Over the coat came the robe of the ephod. This was blue, and was surrounded at the hem by alternate pomegranates and bells of gold. The bells were to sound forth

praise to God. The pomegranates were to be typical of the first fruits and joy of God's service. The two together symbolized the offering of lip and life. Wherever the priest went these bells were to sound so that the worshippers might always be conscious of his presence and of his ministrations in the temple on their behalf. It was a testimony that he was alive although he was treading God's courts, and entering even into the Holy of Holies.

The Ephod.

Above this blue robe was the ephod itself, a gorgeous coat or cover of blue and scarlet and white linen and gold thread twisted and worked together, signifying beauty and glory. This ephod was held together by two onyx stones set in ouches of gold. On these were engraven the names of the twelve tribes, which the high priest, as the representative of the people, was to bear upon his shoulder into the presence of God. The shoulders represented the seat of power. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." The high priest bore the burden of the sin and sorrow of the whole nation into the presence of God, and then returned from God to the worshippers again. We must remember that the high priest typified two things: in the first place, he typified the whole nation of Israel, and when he moved about the tabernacle, when he prayed, when he went into the Holy of Holies, it was the nation of Israel that approached to God in his person and worshipped and prayed. But, in the second place, he typified also the Mediator between God and man, the coming Christ. Therefore, when he went forth to the people again he went forth with the pardon which God had given him, and with the peace granted to them. This made the carrying of the names upon his shoulder doubly beautiful. He as their representative presented all their sorrows before God; he as the representative of Christ sustained them in their sorrows.

The Breastplate of Judgment.

The names of the twelve tribes were also engraven upon the breastplate of judgment, which the priest wore upon his

breast. This was bound to the ephod by lacings of blue and rings and chains of gold, and had a deep signification.

The heart is the source of light and love. The high priest bore the twelve tribes upon his heart into the presence of God, and received from God the acquittal for their sins. Hence this plate is called the breastplate of judgment. They were judged and they were pardoned. Within the breastplate were the mysterious Urim and Thummim. The breastplate was worn upon the heart of the priest to show that Israel was very close to God, resting at the fountain of the love of God. What the Urim and the Thummim were no one knows, but from them the will of God was declared to the priest and from the priest to the nation. Thus the will of God is represented as going out from the heart, from the fountain of light and love.

The breastplate contained the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and when the priest went into the presence of God all the tribes were remembered and brought by name before God. "I know thee by name" (Exodus xxxiii. 12). "He calleth His own sheep by name" (St. John x. 3).

The Mitre.

Lastly, upon the priest's head was a mitre of fine white linen, typifying a crown of righteousness and purity, and laced upon the mitre of blue cords was a gold plate with the inscription "Holiness to the Lord." This inscription was placed upon the forehead, the seat of intelligence and thought, the meaning being that the highest part of man, that is to say, his intelligence and thought, were "separated to God," for so the words "Holiness to the Lord" should more literally be translated.

The priest was the representative of the nation, therefore this inscription upon his forehead marked out the whole nation also as separated from sin, and as having its highest powers, its thoughts, and its intelligence, bent upon and consecrated to the service of God.

Zacharias looked forward to the time when everything would be separated to God, and the inscription "Holiness to the Lord" would be not only upon the priest's mitre but

also upon the bridles of the horses—a vision of a day yet to come, but towards which the eyes of those who fear God are turned with joy and hope.

Christ our High Priest.

The book of Hebrews has been called the commentary upon Exodus because it illuminates all the types and ceremonies of the law, as also the person of the high priest, with the light of later revelation, and lifts our thought from the high priest on earth to Christ, our High Priest, who has passed before us into the Heavens. We lift up our eyes with joy and see that we have to-day One far greater and far holier than could have been conceived from the account of the high priest as he is represented in the book of Exodus. We see the great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, with the glory of God, enthroned within the Heavens, great also as Man because without sin, sympathizing with sin because He “was made sin for us,” absolving us from sin because He is God, and able, therefore, to pardon all who come unto God by Him. He has the power of a continual priesthood. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” He is free from sin, therefore He can stand in the very presence of God. He is free from sin, therefore the love of God is poured forth in full abundance from Him.

The types and shadows of the old law and the old priesthood have passed away because they are united in Christ, and have passed away into the Heavens with Him. The high priest no longer offers sacrifice for sin, because He has offered sacrifice once for all, and because through Him forgiveness has been given. Where there is forgiveness there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. The forms and ceremonies have passed away. We lift ourselves in spirit to our High Priest who has passed before us into the Heavens. There is no longer any high priest on earth, but the servants of God are called to be a royal priesthood; like the priest of old, they are to be clothed with fine linen, pure and white, the righteousness of the saints. They are to be sprinkled with blood mingled with oil, that is to say, with the blood of pardon and the oil of consecration, signifying the grace of the

Holy Spirit. They are to be separate because set apart for their Master's use. As Christ has passed away into the Heavens, so, too, have all the types and shadows which prefigured Him. We look back upon them only as they help us to look forward, to lift our eyes to the High Priest above, who by His one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

The Meeting between the Earthly High Priest and the Heavenly High Priest.

The high priest was the leader and representative of the nation of Israel. Did he ever meet Christ, the eternal High Priest, and if so, how did he in his official capacity meet and recognize Him? What was the attitude of Caiaphas towards Christ? Caiaphas was the spiritual representative of the children of Israel at the time of Christ's ministry on earth. His heart beat in unison with the heart of the Jews. He ministered in the temple, the meeting-place between God and man. He bore the government and the burden of the nation upon his shoulder. Did he lay that burden at the feet of Christ? He bore the twelve tribes upon his heart. Did his heart beat with joy, did his heart go forth in prayer and rejoicing to Christ? He was anointed with the holy oil, representing the Spirit of God. Did he, like Zacharias, see the salvation of Israel in Christ, and acknowledge that Christ was come to be "the light of the Gentiles, the glory of His people Israel"?

When we think of this, how terrible, how impossible, does the account in the gospels seem. We read in St. Matthew that Caiaphas adjured Christ to tell him whether He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and Caiaphas, as the representative of the nation, received the answer, "Thou hast said," and hearing it rent his clothes and said, "He hath spoken blasphemy," and received and concurred in the verdict of the nation, "He is guilty of death."

If the heart of Caiaphas was in unison with the heart of the Jewish nation, what judgment did he deserve? What

judgment did they deserve? Can we wonder at the destruction of Jerusalem or if His blood still rests upon them and upon their children's children?

The Israelite of Old and the Christian of To-day.

Christ at His death entered into Heaven with the atonement of His own blood, and bade all men draw near with boldness to the throne of Christ. What a contrast there is between the way which was opened even to the enlightened Jew and the way which is open now to the Christian. The conscience of the Israelite was appeased by the sacrifice of the dumb beast, and looked forward dimly by faith to a Redeemer whom that sacrifice represented. But the Christian draws near to God with a worship of confidence and love. He knows that he is cleansed by the blood of Christ. He is consecrated a priest to God, and has a right to come into the presence of God, and to minister to Him. He enters into the courts of the tabernacle, his activities are consecrated to God, he can show forth the light of God in a dark world, his prayer can go up before God as the incense, he stands in the very presence of God.

How sad it is that, although all these privileges are open to Christians, very few understand and claim them. Very many care nothing at all about them, and in heart are little more advanced than the Israelites of old. They tarry outside in the outer court, oppressed with the thought of sin, and with some dim fear and awe upon them, and neither heed nor hear the voice of Jesus when He calls them and bids them draw near to Him and enter into the glory and light of His presence. And yet Jesus says, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

LESSON XXVIII.

EXODUS, CHAPTERS XXIX AND XXX.

THE HIGH PRIEST TAKEN FROM AMONG MEN.

The Pattern on the Mount.

Three commissions at this time had been given to Moses upon the mount. He was to build the tabernacle, to institute the order of the priesthood, to make the symbolical garments which were to be worn when ministering in the temple, and to institute the sacrifices and services of the temple. All was to be made according to the pattern showed to him on the mount.

The High Calling of the Priest.

We look with great interest at the account of the first appointed place of meeting between God and man, not only because of what it represented to the Israelites, but also because of what it foreshadows to us of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city without foundations whose Maker and Builder is God. We read with even greater interest the account of the institution of the priesthood, and of everything connected with the high priest and his office, because when we read the account in Exodus in conjunction with the Epistle to the Hebrews, the inspired commentary upon it, we see a foreshadowing of Christ, and of His offices as the Mediator and High Priest to man. In the person of the high priest two characters were united—he is the representative of Christ to the people, and the representative of the most beautiful elements of the character of the nation when sanctified from sin and presented

before God. His garments typified purity, glory, and separation for the service of God. Upon his shoulder he bore the burden of the nation, its weakness and its needs; upon his heart he bore the twelve tribes personally by name, and from the Urim and Thummim he declared the will of God. As high priest he offered sacrifice for sin, through which alone a meeting-place between God and man could be found, and thus opened a vision of an entrance into greater glory even than that of the Heavenly Jerusalem—a vision of the glory and of the love of God who, through Christ, would draw near to His ransomed people.

The Calling of Aaron.

We wonder, as we look back upon what the office of the high priest meant to the Jewish nation, as well as forward to what the office of the High Priest who is sitting on the right hand of the throne in the Heavens means to the whole world, how much of all this was revealed to Aaron, how far he understood his calling, and the responsibility consequent upon it.

When Moses was called to stand as mediator between God and Pharaoh and the children of Israel, he hesitated, and judged himself unfit to speak to Pharaoh. How could he arouse the Israelites and bring them forth out of the land of bondage? Aaron was about to stand as mediator between God and Israel, to bring the children of Israel out of the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the service of God. He also had a task of great magnitude before him. If it was hard to rouse the Israelites to leave Pharaoh, it was harder still to rouse them from the service of sin. Moreover, in himself Aaron was a far weaker man than Moses, and living in less constant communion with God. And yet Aaron was chosen to be the high priest instead of Moses, so that the glory of the priesthood might rest not in the character of the man who fulfilled it, but in the office instituted by God. When we think of this we understand more fully the 29th chapter of Exodus. We understand the necessity

for the ceremony of the cleansing of the body, the clothing it with priestly garments, and the offering up of the sacrifices. We see the glory and the beauty of the office on the one hand, the weakness and sinfulness of the office-bearer on the other.

The Ceremony of the Consecration.

When the whole assembly were gathered together, Aaron and his sons were to come to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and to be met by Moses. When they had been cleansed with water in the presence of the congregation, Aaron was to be clothed with the garments of the high priest, and anointed with the anointing oil. This oil had been specially prepared from certain spices, and was consecrated. No one might compound an oil similar to it or use it; if anyone were to venture to do so he would be put to death. This seems strange until we remember that this oil was so sacredly guarded because it typified the Holy Spirit. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him."

When the mitre had been placed upon the head of Aaron, the plate of pure gold was put upon the mitre; this was inscribed with the words "Holiness to the Lord," and was called a holy crown, because this inscription was the summing up of that towards which all the building of the tabernacle, all its priesthood, all its service tended—separation to the Lord, and holiness to the Lord.

Then the high priest was anointed with the sacred oil, an oil of refreshment and of royal dignity. The Levites were not clothed like the high priest in what are called garments of glory, but in white linen, typifying purity and separation. Both Aaron and the Levites were sprinkled with blood, that is to say, they were cleansed by blood from sin, and consecrated by oil for the special service of God.

The Three Great Offerings.

Men differ from one another in their knowledge and idea of God as widely as they are scattered apart from

one another upon the face of the earth, but whatever their differences may be, underlying them all there seem to be certain God-given instincts. Men believe that there is a God, a Being invisible and removed from them. They have a consciousness of sin, and of offence against that Supreme Being. Therefore, they fear Him and desire to propitiate Him, and in order to propitiate Him they seem to have an instinctive feeling which leads them to sacrifice, to the shedding of blood, and to the offering up of a life for their sin.

This God-given instinct of a consciousness of sin and of the need of a propitiation for sin found expression among the Jews in three great offerings, instituted by the command of God in the twenty-ninth chapter of Exodus—the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the peace-offering. What amongst heathen nations could only be called an instinct by the ordinances revealed to Moses became a reasonable sacrifice and service. It is true that as Christians we read into these ancient sacrifices much more than was known either to Aaron or to the Israelites of old, for they saw through a glass darkly, whereas we, in the light; they saw foreshadowed in outline their sin-bearer; we see Christ who was offered to bear the sins of many.

The Sin-Offering.

Whilst the heart of Aaron must have beat high with the thought of his great calling and of the responsibility laid upon him, he was called upon to take part in three ceremonies which followed closely one upon another. There was first the sin-offering. For this a bullock was brought before the tabernacle of the congregation, and Aaron and his sons were called upon to gather together and lay their hands upon the head of the bullock. It was then slain and the fat and certain parts of the entrails were placed upon the altar, whilst the remainder of the bullock was carried without the camp and entirely burned, in later times upon the ashes that had been removed from previous burnt-offerings. The blood of the

bullock was then sprinkled upon the horns of the altar and poured out beside the bottom of the altar.

Aaron must have known that in some mysterious way his sin was being transferred from himself to the bullock on which his hands were laid, and a strange feeling must have passed through him when he knew that his sin was thus put away and taken outside the camp. How far stronger would his feeling have been if he had looked upon the sin-offering as we do, if he had known that the Son of God would one day be crucified for him without the city, and that his guilt, which seemed for the moment to have been laid upon the bullock, had really passed to and was laid upon Christ; that is to say, that the pain and punishment for all that was evil and repulsive in his nature would pass to that sinless One, and would be atoned for and be carried by Him.

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.”

“Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews xiii. 11-12).

The Burnt-Offering.

The distinctive feature of the burnt-offering was not so much the putting away of sin as the offering up of the whole life. It meant an offering which would ascend to God and be acceptable to Him. A ram (or a lamb for the continual burnt-offering) was brought forward, and Aaron and his sons were once again gathered together and placed their hands upon it. By this act they signified that the sacrifice of the ram would be accepted in their behalf. “He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering and it shall be accepted for him.” The ram was then slain, his blood sprinkled upon the altar, and he was offered up and burnt upon the altar. We do not know exactly what this offering signified to Aaron or to his descendants. Had its meaning been revealed to them as it was to St. Paul, their souls would have been

filled with awe, for it meant that they were to devote themselves, body soul, and spirit, to God. All that was fleshly and evil was to be burned away, and their life was to ascend as a sweet savour, an offering made by fire, unto the Lord.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans xii. 1).

This is the thought which we express in our Communion service when, after we have partaken by faith of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrifice for sin, we say, "we offer and present ourselves unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice."

In the sin-offering man could take no part, for the atonement for sin could only be made by a divine sacrifice, but in the burnt-offering we are united by faith with Christ; as Christ came to do the will of God, so we are called to do "the will of God from the heart"

The Peace-Offering.

The third sacrifice represented a further step in the spiritual life. Another ram was brought forward and Aaron and his sons placed their hands upon its head. Again a full realization of the signification of their act would have made this sacrifice very full of joy and wonder to them. In the first place, they were admitted to service, the blood of the ram was placed upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, a token that his ear was to be open to hear the voice of God; upon the thumb of his right hand, to show that he was accepted to offer sacrifice for the sins of the nation; upon the great toe of the right foot, so that his foot was sanctified to tread the hallowed courts and to carry out the service of God.

The ram was then divided into two parts, and one part was offered for a burnt-offering upon the altar. This typified accepted service. The other part was given to Moses and to Aaron, who were to offer it as a wave-offering before

God, together with the loaf of bread, the cake and the wafer. These all signified a service of thanksgiving, and they were to be partaken of by the priests in a feast of rejoicing, as representing the outcome of a thankful heart. The meaning of the peace-offering was accepted service, thanksgiving, and communion. In this thanksgiving feast we see a foreshadowing of the heavenly feast in the New Jerusalem.

The Continued Sacrifices.

For seven days these sacrifices were to be continued, but the burnt-offering was to be continually before God, because it was a sign of the daily consecration of the life of the high priest and of the nation to God. If this burnt sacrifice were offered continually, then there would be a constant place of meeting between God and man. The glory of God would descend upon the tabernacle, and would not only descend, it would dwell and tarry among them, and by that Presence they would receive the strength which would guide, purify, and keep them. It was this perpetual presence of God in the temple which Paul referred to when he said the Christian was to be the temple of the living God, because God had said: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (II. Corinthians vi. 16).

All three sacrifices are united in the person of Christ, who died for our sin, that we should henceforth live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. If we may, indeed, be the temple of God, how needful is it for us to realize our high and holy calling, and to avoid all that defiles either soul or body. Jesus teaches us that it is not the things which come from outside which defile a man, but those things which proceed out of the mouth and the heart, such as evil thoughts, murders, adulteries and so forth (St. Matthew xv. 19).

The Carrying out of the Directions.

The directions having been given as to the construction of the temple, the institution of the high priest, his garments and offices, Moses is told that the men who will

carry out these directions have also been marked by the eye of God, and chosen for their office. It is not only the high priest, the leader of the nation, who is known and called of God, it is the workmen also, those who will be skilled in handicraft of all kinds, and those who are willing and wise-hearted. To men like these came then, and has come at different periods of the world's history, the message that the Lord hath need of them.

The Call of Bezaleel.

The thirty-first chapter gives us the account of the call of Bezaleel for the construction of the work, and of his qualifications for it. He is about to be filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding, in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship, so that he may devise cunning works, in cutting of stone and in carving of timber. Moreover, he is to be given the power of teaching others, who will unite with him in his work. Exodus xxxv. 34: "The Lord . . . hath put in his heart that he may teach." He is about to give him also others who are "wise-hearted," who can help him so that his directions may be faithfully carried out. There is a beautiful thought in this. We know that all our powers of heart and mind and body come from God, and, therefore, that whatever skill or knowledge we have is God-given. But from this chapter we gain a fuller understanding, and learn that God may give His Spirit in special measure to men in order to enable them to carry out not only the work that we are accustomed to consider God-given, such as that of the brain, but also that which comes from brain and hand combined. From this chapter we see that the work which we may think menial may be God-given, and that the way in which it is done may be directed by the Spirit of God, even to the minutest detail, and therefore, because done in the fear of God, be inspired and divine.

This makes the feeling of awe and reverence for the combined skill of heart and hand which comes over us as we stand in a great cathedral or look at the work of one of the old masters.

The Sabbath Day.

As Moses finishes giving directions about the tabernacle to the Israelites he adds a word of caution. In their eagerness to carry out the directions and construction that have been given them, they may be tempted to work upon the Sabbath day. They may think that the sacredness of the work gives them the right to carry it out upon the Sabbath day, but Moses is told to warn them that although the work is great, yet the observance of the Sabbath, the token that God is their King, the acknowledgment of His Kingship which they make when they observe His Sabbath, is greater still. They are to be known everywhere as the servants of God by their observance of the Sabbath day, and God will be known to be their God by the blessing which will descend upon them on that day, and, therefore, He warns them that no eagerness for His work must tempt them in any way to interfere with this. They are to carry out the construction of the tabernacle willingly and with their heart, but they are to remember as they do it, "that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel xv. 22). They may not do evil that good may come.

This was the last direction given, and after this Moses descended from the mount with the two tablets of testimony, which were the witness of God's will in his hand. They were written with the finger of God. By this we understand that they were marvellously inscribed. They were not given through the mediation of angels, but from God Himself. His unalterable will was engraven upon stone, a sign that those ten words would stand forever. Heaven and earth might pass away, but His words would not pass away.

LESSON XXIX.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XXXII.

REBELLION AND RESTORATION.

The Delay at Mount Sinai.

A month had elapsed since Moses had gone up into Mount Sinai. During that time he had had a vision of the approach which God was about to make towards Israel, and of the place of meeting which was to be provided, and upon which the presence of God would rest. He had also received instructions as to how the nation should approach God, and in the person of the high priest, come into His presence. This had been the revelation of the goodness of God towards Israel, what meantime had been the attitude of Israel towards God?

The Israelites were still encamped around Mount Sinai, on which the visible glory of God was resting. They had not moved away from the place in which their covenant had been signed and sealed with blood. They had been fed day by day with manna, they had been separated only one month from the inspiring presence of Moses, and yet in that short time how far had they fallen away from God? They seem to have lost their faith in God and in Moses, so that he who had been the hero of their escape from Egypt has now become to them *this* Moses.

In order to account for the sudden change we must remember that the delay around Mount Sinai must have seemed very purposeless to them. Why should they not go forward to the promised land? And, again, the absence of Moses led them to wish for the presence of a visible God, some one whom they could see and on whom they could

rely to lead them. It was Moses who had confronted Pharaoh, and whose rod had rolled back the waves of the Red Sea, who had brought them so far on their journey, and at whose intercession the manna had fallen upon them; but he had gone, he had possibly been destroyed in the mountain which glowed with fire and with smoke. Now that he was gone, how could they go forward? There was some reason for their anxiety, but it was an anxiety which should have led them to appeal to Aaron in order that he might make intercession for them. There was no reason why they should have shaken off their allegiance to God and craved for an idol and for idol worship.

The Fall of Aaron.

The next contrast is between the ordinances which God had given to Aaron as high priest, and the action which Aaron as leader and representative of the people had taken.

Aaron was to be the high priest, the man whose shoulder was to bear the burdens and the trials of the Israelites, and to carry them into the presence of God; whose heart was to beat with light and love to them and with love to God. He was to make sacrifice for them, to free them from their sin. This was to be his office, his high calling.

The character of Aaron resembles in many respects that of St. Peter before the Spirit of God called him to be a leader. He had naturally the temperament of an orator; he was soft and pliable in the hour of danger, instead of being strong and courageous. He was a man who narrowly missed the mark of greatness—vehement, vacillating, plastic, impressionable, eloquent. He seems to have been overwhelmed by the crisis; it is even possible that the doubt and despair which the people were experiencing had taken hold of him also, and so inclined him to take a middle course. His dread of future discord among the people and his love of popularity led him to sacrifice truth in order to save the emergency of the hour, and thus the spark which might have been quenched by strong determination grew into a mighty fire which destroyed thousands. Some have thought that Aaron demanded the gold of the people in order that

the sacrifice of their precious things might deter them from idolatry. It may be so, but it seems more probable that in his heart he himself inclined towards idolatry with them.

The Danger of Compromise.

Aaron received the earrings at the hands of the people and fashioned them with a graven tool after he had made them into a molten calf. The idol was doubtless similar in form to the idols of Egypt, but it was dedicated to the God of Israel, and the worship of that God was the worship which was to be rendered to it. As soon as the people saw the calf it awoke all the old feeling of idolatry and sin which they had learnt in Egypt, and they cried out, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!"

The first compromise which Aaron had made required a second, and from making the calf Aaron proceeded to make the altar also, and proclaimed a feast on the morrow to God. Possibly he was himself startled at the eagerness with which the people had greeted their idol, but the evil was already done. They might intend to offer sacrifices to God upon the altar similar to those which they had offered at the great covenant sacrifice; but they mingled with these sacrifices the feasting and drinking to which they had been accustomed in Egypt, and also the idol dances, full of wild freedom and licentiousness. It seems hardly possible that the men and women who but a few weeks before had witnessed the great deliverance from Egypt, had been led by the pillar of fire, had looked with awe-struck eye upon the Red Sea as it overwhelmed their enemies, and had heard the voice of God speaking to them out of the mountain, could with one consent ascribe all these miracles, all this glory, all this power, to a calf which they knew had been made out of the earrings which they had themselves taken out of their ears. Their answer would have been that they could not be left leaderless in the wilderness, and at the mercy of enemies, such as the Amalekites, who surrounded them. Aaron would have defended himself by saying that it was better to make a compromise and to lead

the people to worship God through an idol, rather than to let them sink back into idolatry altogether. But neither of these reasons fully explains or can make excuse for their sin.

There is in the heart of each of us a tendency towards idol worship, that is to say, a yearning towards something visible, something which we can see and in which we can put our trust. Hence the need of Divine help in order that we may lift our hearts to the unseen and to the spiritual. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is only the pure in heart who can see God; that is to say, only those whose souls are enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit to look past the seen into the unseen. The danger of idolatry is that the soul which is drawn towards it will find satisfaction in it and rest in the visible instead of reaching forward to the invisible and the eternal.

The Contrast between Heaven and Earth.

In the New Testament the contrast between the glory of Heaven and the sin of earth is brought out very strongly at the time of the transfiguration, when Christ and His disciples, descending from the mountain, met the demoniac boy surrounded by the helpless disciples and the mocking multitude. In the Old Testament a similar contrast occurs in this chapter. Moses had left the presence of God where he had been given a revelation such as no other man in Old Testament times had received or would receive. He had been in the spirit and had heard the voice of God speaking to him, and he had been surrounded by the calm and majesty of God. Then suddenly there came a swift change, like a withering blast of winter across a summer sky. It was not only the interruption of the communion of Moses with the unseen, it was the rising of a dark cloud of sin between the whole people of Israel and God, so that for the time being they seemed to be separated from God, as indeed was the case—they had separated themselves by their own act and deed. They had said that it was *this* Moses which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and God had taken them at their word. He told Moses to go down.

"*Thy* people which *thou* broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves," and furthermore, that the just punishment of their sin was to fall upon them. Moses was not to be permitted even to plead for them. "Let me alone." They were to be consumed, and a new nation of the seed of Moses was to take their place.

How terrible this sin and this judgment must have seemed when it sounded in the ear of Moses, that ear which had so lately been attuned to nothing but beauty and holiness, and whose thought had been filled with the future which God was preparing for Israel.

The Testing of Moses.

The story of this chapter brings into prominence certain points in the character of Moses. We realize his strength and his marvellous influence over the children of Israel if his removal for one month only could bring so terrible a reaction, so great a relapse into sin. We see his courage and his power when he came down from the mountain, and alone faced the whole nation, more terrible after their feasting and sacrifices than before, when they had come to Aaron, for now they were united and maddened by drink and by sin. We see the force of his character and of his God-given strength when we find how his mere presence amongst them brought them to shame and to repentance. We realize his strength, his self-sacrifice when, for their sake, he offered to be blotted out of the roll of the living. But there was more even than this. We do not always, as we read the chapter, see the beauty and unselfishness of his character, nor realize what the temptation was which he resisted, and which must have come upon him like an overwhelming flood.

The Temptation of Moses and of Christ.

There are two seasons in a man's life when it is especially hard to resist temptation: one, when he is physically weakened by a long and drawn-out time of exhaustion, such as that which came to our Lord at the close of the forty days when He was afterwards an hungered. The other season is when a man has passed through a time of spiritual exalta-

tion, such as this which had come to Moses during the forty days in the mount.

For Moses had been very near to the presence of God, so near that it seemed impossible he could ever fall away, and he was also probably at this time physically exhausted. Whilst he was in this condition of physical exhaustion, combined with spiritual exaltation, there came to him a temptation of somewhat the same nature as the third temptation of our Lord in the wilderness. As Christ was offered all the kingdoms of the earth if He would fall down and worship Satan, so Moses was given the chance of being the founder of the greatest nation upon earth if he would cast away the children of Israel. Why should he weary himself with them any longer? They had repaid him with nothing but rebellion and ingratitude. If they were spared now they would certainly break out again into sin at the first opportunity. How much easier it would be for him to possess the land as his own inheritance. How much greater would be the name which he might make for himself and for his children. God had chosen the family of Aaron, not that of Moses, for the high priesthood, and Aaron had shown himself unworthy of the choice. Would it not be better for the world if all the chief offices of Israel were united in Moses and in his descendants?

But all these considerations seem hardly to have entered into the mind of Moses, and it is in this respect also that we see a foreshadowing of the beauty of the character of Christ represented in him. Thus, we see his love for sinners, his longing for the glory of God, his willingness to bear the punishment of sin, and so substitute himself for them, if by so doing he could make atonement for them. He stands between the wrath of God and the people who have sinned, and he pleads for pardon because of the mercy which God has already shown to them. He places on the one side the power of God, on the other the helplessness of the people. He goes even further, he lifts up his eyes upon the world and pleads for the cause of God, not only in Israel, but among all surrounding nations. If Israel is cast away he fears that the action

of God will be misunderstood by the surrounding nations, and that the glory and power of God which had been vindicated throughout the world by the overthrow of Pharaoh would, if Israel in turn were destroyed, seem to be instead of a power of salvation a power of evil and destruction. He pleads the recollection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the mercy that God has promised unto thousands of them that love Him, and lastly, the very promise and word of God Himself, and thus he stays, as it were, the anger of God, and turns away the sword of avenging justice.

The Power of Prayer.

The power of intercessory prayer, such a prayer as is here recorded, is one of the great mysteries which we can never fathom. We do not know why God should have given such honour to man as to permit him by his prayers to bring down blessings upon a nation, or to avert evil by his prayers either from a nation or from an individual. And yet over and over again in the Bible we find that this honour and power is given to man. As we ponder over this we gain some understanding of how great the help and the blessing must be which comes to the world from the intercession of Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." There are times of despondency in every Christian life; times when we realize the power of evil, when the evil within the Church seems even more deadly because of its far-reaching consequences even than that which is without, and we wonder how and why the cause of religion is still alive amongst us. We look at the sinfulness of the world, the weakness and imperfection of churches and individuals, those who by their very calling should strive against sin. The hosts of evil are so mighty, the hosts of God's servants upon earth so full of evil and of self, and yet the hosts of God prevail, and step by step the hosts of evil fall back. Is the answer to this mystery found when we look up and see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, watching that struggle between right and wrong, and making intercession for each one who is called by His name?

LESSON XXX.

EXODUS, CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SIN OF IDOLATRY.

The Descent from the Mountain.

When his prayer had been answered Moses without delay descended from the mountain. He bore with him the record of the laws of God. Those laws so newly given, so newly broken. The people were shouting and dancing in the plain below, unconscious of the crisis in their history which had just taken place, unconscious of the man who for their sake had passed through the fire of temptation, and had come out victorious.

As he descended the noise of the camp came up into his ears. To Joshua it seemed to be only a noise of war in the camp, but to Moses, whose ear was more sharply attuned to the harmony of Heaven, there seemed to be a discord of evil mingled with the cry of the people, and as he came near the camp he saw the calf upon its altar, and the people dancing around it in the wild licentiousness which they had learned in Egypt. His anger waxed hot against them. They had rebelled against God, and broken His law. They had broken the covenant which they had made, a covenant which they had understood, which had been rehearsed to them, and which they had promised to keep. Moses cast down the two tablets of stone to the foot of the mountain, where they were dashed to pieces, a sign to the congregation of the law which they had more fatally broken, and of the separation that they had made between themselves and God. Then

with the power of a just and holy wrath he entered into their midst, just as in the land of Egypt he had entered into the court of Pharaoh.

He cast down the calf from the pillar on which they were worshipping it, hurled it into the fire from whence it had come, so that the same fire which to the excited imagination of the people had produced a god should devour that god before their eyes. Then taking the shapeless lump out of the fire he broke it to powder on the rocks, and straving the powder upon the water compelled the people to drink it in place of the sweet wine which it is said by some used to form part of the idol feasts in Egypt. The same power of holy wrath which had held the people spellbound whilst he went into their midst continued to hold them, although they were maddened with wine and with sin.

Aaron's Confession.

Then turning to Aaron he sternly required of him an account of what he had done. How was it that he who had been left as the representative and leader of the people, the mediator between them and God, should have sanctioned and lent the semblance of authority to so terrible a revolt?

From his question it seems clear that he thinks some tremendous pressure had been brought to bear upon Aaron. Possibly he thought that personal violence had been attempted against him before he could have done such a deed. "What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" Then follows the deprecating appeal of Aaron. In this reply Aaron has been said to take his place in the long apologetic succession which has continued from Adam down to the present day. His answer, at any rate, has rung down the ages like the answer of our first parents as an example of the miserable process of self-justification by which we seek to blind even our own hearts and to screen ourselves even in our own eyes and in those of others. He says, in effect, that he had not taken the initiative in the act. He had deferred to public opinion, to the

violence around him, just as to-day we are tempted to yield and to justify ourselves by saying that we are only conforming to custom, we are only doing what men require of us. It is essentially the answer of a timid man who has almost persuaded himself that his action was necessary and intended to be for the general good.

The Reply of Aaron.

"Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me." He seeks to deprecate the wrath of Moses against the sin. It is a lie in fact though not in actual words. He has become accustomed to it. He is not joined in holy wrath with Moses against the idolaters. He says it is the fault of the people, and yet not entirely their fault; it is the fault of Moses who left them in doubt and anxiety; it is not altogether even the fault of Moses, it is the fault of the fire; Aaron did but cast the gold into the fire and it was the fire which produced the idol in response to their appeal.

If we put the two verses, Aaron's apology and the actual statement of the fact side by side, we see how miserable the excuse is. "And I said unto them, whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off, so they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (verse 24). Whereas the record stands, "And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a golden calf."

Phillips Brooks in his sermon upon this text points out that this answer which Aaron makes is typical of the way in which we excuse ourselves in our own heart and to others. We lay the blame upon the fire, "the fire did it. We are the victim of circumstances."

"The world has made me what I am, this fiery passionate wicked world. I had in my hands the gold of my boyhood which God gave me. Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

"What can you ask of me, this is a mercantile community. The business man who does not attend to his

business goes to the wall. I am what this intense commercial life has made me. I put my life in there, and it came out this."

We did but do this or that, and there came out these consequences. Aaron shirks his responsibility. He does not acknowledge his sin as sin. He tries to show that he is only the tool of circumstances, and he ignores the fact that as the representative of the people he was bound to take each circumstance as it came and turn it to God. He was not to follow the multitude to do evil.

As well as the shirking of responsibility, there is also the meanness and the shuffling which comes out in his reply. He seems to lack or to have lost altogether the strong, bold outline of right and wrong which ought to characterize the leader. It is true that he cast the gold into the fire, but the calf came out engraven by his own tools or those of the workman to whom he had entrusted it.

This answer of Aaron, this failure to see his character in the true light, is even sadder than his action. It shows a lack of responsibility as well as a lack of moral eyesight. The personality which comes from Christ is after all the only thing that gives power of grandeur to a character. It was not until Aaron had been cleansed and indued with strength that he became the high priest of his nation with power and sympathy to minister to the people.

The Further Action of Moses.

Moses wastes no time in arguing with him, he turns from him without a word. The sin must be put away and punished at all costs, and, therefore, in hot anger he turns towards the people. The first thing was to separate them and to find out those who would leave their sin and those who would not. He stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side let him come unto me." Probably a great division took place amongst the assembled multitudes, and those who had little part or lot in the matter would go away with shame into their tents. These might be the men who had seen

the sin and had been unable to stop it, or who, when Moses stood among them, had for the first time seen it in its true light. The rest of the assembly were divided into two parts. One half ranged themselves on the side of Moses; the other half who still rejoiced in the idol worship, or who had gone so far in licentiousness and sin that they were incapable of coming to themselves, probably stood in half-stunned groups here and there throughout the camp. If this were the case, it would explain the action of Moses and of the Levites. Moses told the Levites to go, sword in hand, from gate to gate throughout the camp and to slay every man they met without pity, even if he were a companion or a brother. That is to say, they were to slay all the people who were so stupefied with their sin, or defiant in it, that they had not either ranged themselves on the right side or in shame retreated to their tents.

It was necessary that this should be done, that they should be destroyed out of Israel, just as it was necessary for the world that the nations of Canaan should be cut off lest they should become a plague-spot to the whole earth. These men would have been a plague-spot to the whole nation. Also the judgment upon them was a warning to Israel that the sin of idolatry to which they would be especially exposed when they entered the land of Canaan must be destroyed at all costs from their midst.

An awful night of repentance and heart-break must have followed this scene in the camp of Israel. There would be mourning in many a tent because there was one slain out of it, and mourning in many a heart; for those who had escaped would be terrified at the thought of their sin, and realize how narrowly they themselves had escaped punishment.

The High Priest.

As we think of Aaron we wonder at the thought of what the depth of his shame and mortification must have been, and we wonder how God after this could have kept

His promise that the office of the high priest should be given to him and to his sons. Certainly from the character of Aaron we understand how entirely the office of the high priest rested for its value upon what it signified, upon the promise of God, revealed through it, how little upon the individual man, as he was in himself, and until he had been indued with power from on high.

We see how clearly the office of the high priest was but a passing shadow, pointing forward to the great High Priest, the Sinless One, who alone could fulfil in His own character all that was typified by His office.

Further Mediation of Moses for Israel.

The sin having been put away, Moses on the morrow returned into the presence of God, and entered into that presence with the burden of the sin of the whole nation upon himself. He made no excuse for them, such as Aaron made for himself. He did the one thing that is possible either for those who have sinned or for those who represent the sin of others, he acknowledged their guilt, he pleaded for their forgiveness, and whilst he pleaded he suddenly broke off his prayer. It seems as though the realization of their sin had come with irresistible power upon him, and that in the presence of the holy God even he cannot plead that it should be forgiven. The words that took the place of pleading in the broken prayer were, that he himself might be blotted out of the book which God had written.

Cut off out of the Book of the Living.

Two interpretations are given of this prayer. One is that the book which God has written is the roll of the living citizens, those who belong to his spiritual Church below, and Moses, when he makes this prayer, so completely identifies himself with the people that if they must die he will die with them. The second interpretation, which seems more probable, is that he pleads that he may make atonement for them, that he may be blotted out of God's book, or out of the book of the living,

if only they may be pardoned. It was only the day before that he had resisted the temptation which had been offered him, of being made in his own person the founder of a great nation upon the earth. Out of pity for the people he had pleaded against their overthrow, but now to-day he is stirred even deeper, and his compassion is moved to the very depth of his being. Like Paul, who was willing to be accursed for the people, Moses is willing to be cut off, thus showing that he foreshadows Him who was not only willing but who also in very deed was cut off for the sins of the people and made atonement for them.

If the prayer of Moses has reached one of the loftiest heights to which man could ever attain, the reply given by God has a majesty and a grandeur which meets his prayer and even goes beyond it. "Whosoever hath sinned against Me him will I blot out of My book." This has been the attitude of God from all eternity towards sin, and will be, except where the pardoning blood of Christ comes in between the sinner and God.

The nation is restored. Moses may return and once again resume his place amongst them, but whilst they are forgiven the consequences of their sin must remain. This is one of the great primal laws of the world, sin may be forgiven, but its consequences do and ever will remain.

The immediate presence of God will be withdrawn. His angel or messenger will go before them and will lead them. Their sin has separated them from God, and in addition to this separation there will be a visitation from God upon them, a sickness will fall amongst them, and destroy those who had escaped from the sword of the Levites.

One Righteous Man within the City.

As we close the chapter, two or three thoughts stand out like stars in a dark night above the dark impression of the weakness and sinfulness of human nature which has been laid bare in it, and these thoughts are, first,

the marvellous power for good which may be exercised in a nation by any one man who has learned the secret of God's presence, and who has the strength and compassion which enable him to guide and to save his fellow-men, one who knows how to plead in prayer and to mingle self-sacrifice with his prayer. The long years that had been spent by Moses alone in the wilderness had done more to fit him for the leadership of the children of Israel than the preceding years in the court of Pharaoh. If Aaron takes his place in the great apologetic succession Moses takes his place in the roll of God's saints who, by a living faith, have cleansed and purified the conception of God which prevailed amongst their fellow-men, and who have stood in the forefront of the battle against idolatry and sin.

Finally, we learn from the attitude of Moses what should be the true attitude of a servant of God towards idolatry. There should be no parleying with it, no allowance made for it. Moses did not stand to inquire how much worship of God there was mingled with the worship of the idol, he saw in it one thing and one thing only, and that was that it would separate man from God. It would draw him down from Heaven to earth, and that it belonged to and was intermingled with the character of the darkest places upon earth, and, therefore, whilst filled with an infinite pity for those who had fallen under its sway and were idolaters, with a ruthless hand he destroyed it from off the face of the earth.

LESSON XXXI.

EXODUS, CHAPTERS XXXIII. AND XXXIV.

THE GLORY OF GOD AS REVEALED TO MOSES.

The Cloud of Sin.

What a swift change had passed over the children of Israel within a few days, it might almost be said within a few hours. The revelation of hope which had been revealed to Moses in the message which God was giving him as to the construction of the tabernacle had been interrupted by the noise of revelry and sin. The sight and the sound of sin never come to us in their true awfulness on earth because we are accustomed to them. Sin is within us, it surrounds us on all sides, our very senses are deadened to it. We do not realize what it is until we see it in the light of the holiness of God or of Christ, or till we see it as it appears in the eyes of one of God's servants who has breathed the Heavenly atmosphere, and who comes directly upon it from the presence chamber of God. When Moses came down from the mountain there was roused in him a holy wrath, not against Aaron and the children of Israel, but against the sin they were committing, and, therefore, it must be put away at all costs. He forced them to loathe their sin, and he destroyed those who had been the leaders in it, because their influence would have been fatal to the nation. Then turning from the people, still filled with anguish for their sin and for its consequences, he cast himself before God in an agony of supplication, and offered his life if

he by any means could make atonement for their sin. His prayer was accepted, they were pardoned, but the consequences of their sin remained. God's face was turned away from His people, and His presence could no longer be with them. A national mourning was proclaimed, and the people watched in sorrow-stricken silence waiting to see whether this sentence would indeed come to pass, or whether, through the mediation of Moses, God would yet return to visit His people.

The Removal of the Tent of Meeting.

As a sign that the near presence of God had been removed, Moses took what is here called the tabernacle, but which probably had been his own tent, and which for the time being had been set apart for the service of God, and pitched it far off outside the camp. The meaning of this action was fully understood by the people, for we read that they watched Moses every time as he went backwards and forwards to this place of meeting, every man standing at his tent door and gazing wistfully after him. To watch was the only thing that was possible for them; they could make no atonement for their sin; they could only stand and wait; they could only ask one another would God have mercy upon them? They had learned the ever-existing presence of God, they had been taught His holiness, His justice, His power, and His goodness, they had realized all this even at the times when they had murmured and gone back in their hearts to Egypt; but this time it was not justice, power, or gifts which they wanted, their sin had gone farther than murmuring and called alone for God's pardon and mercy. They had turned in their hearts against the goodness of God, and He had removed far off from them.

There were certain respects in which this rebellion had been far worse than those of former times when they had turned back in heart to Egypt, because it had been without excuse. There had been no stress of strong hunger or of thirst to tempt them, but they had given way to a deliberate rebellion of spirit, a deliberate breaking away from the

newly given commandments of God. They had set up an idol and worshipped it; they had forgotten God their Saviour; they had despised the pleasant land; they had not believed His word.

The Removal of the Pillar of Cloud.

As they watched in a silence which could be felt they saw a pillar of cloud stand at the door of the tabernacle which Moses had just pitched, and taking it as the first sign of God's returning mercy to them, every man rose up and worshipped, each one at his tent door.

Thus day by day they watched Moses as he went backwards and forwards to the camp or to the tabernacle; sometimes amongst them, exercising his necessary duties as their leader; sometimes in the camp where the presence of God rested, exercising his still more necessary work as intercessor and mediator for them. One man only remained in constant worship in the tabernacle, and that was Joshua the son of Nun.

Joshua as the Future Leader of the People.

Joshua had for some time been marked out as a coming leader amongst the Israelites. He had headed the battle against the Amalekites, and had accompanied Moses when he went up into the mountain. Now he was called to be alone with God in the tent, and the Scripture is silent as to what passed between him and God, just as it is silent as to the times when Paul and other servants of God were receiving that deeper training which fitted them to stand in the forefront of the battle and to lead His host. All we read is that he was alone with God constantly in the tabernacle. What a strange and wonderful time it must have been to him. He had been in the mountain with Moses, he had seen the vision of God, and he had come down from that light and glory into one of the darkest valleys of human sin and ingratitude. At this solemn crisis in the history of Israel, whilst the whole nation was in suspense, he waited in the presence of God. No wonder that the lessons which he learnt in silence there prepared

him for the struggle of after years, when he led the army of the Israelites into Canaan and fought the battle against idolatry and sin. All through his history we find his unwavering steadfastness in this respect; he made no covenant with the idolaters of the land, he destroyed their idols and cut down their groves.

In the silence, awe, and suspense of this season in the tabernacle he learned to be a leader such as Israel needed at this time, a leader who would stand out in God's army, one who, as far as the record of his life tells us, never fell into open sin or brought down judgment upon his people.

Moses' Prayer of Intercession.

Among the portions of the Bible which are of peculiar preciousness to us are those in which the prayers of God's saints are recorded, for as we read them the veil seems for a moment to be withdrawn and we see how their spirits rose by faith into the very presence of God; and as we see it the way opens to us also, we learn how a man may commune with God face to face, even as a man speaketh unto his friend.

This prayer rises far above self. It is a prayer of intercession, a yearning, not only for the people of God, but also for a fuller revelation of God to man. In it the spirit seems to pass beyond the bounds allotted to man and to seek for what as yet eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. He seeks a revelation impossible to mortal man because his eye is dulled and his heart weighted down by sin.

"The Effectual Fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man."

This prayer has been called a yearning for sonship. Moses pleads first for the work God has given him to do, then for the clear burning of a light to lighten the Gentiles, and, lastly, for a revelation of the nature of God to his bodily as well as to his spiritual senses. He rehearses in the ear of God the work to which he has been called and the responsibility with which he has been entrusted.

God has told him to lead the people out of the wilderness into the promised land, and yet he does not know whether, when he rises to obey the command, the presence of God will be with him, or whether that presence, on account of sin, will be in large measure withdrawn, and a messenger or angel substituted for the Divine presence. And yet God who has given him this task has at the same time shown His favour towards him personally, a favour so great that God has called him by name and has told him that he has found grace in His sight. He pleads on account of the work, and on account of God's favour to him, that He will reveal His purpose to him, and that He will again consider this nation as His people. In reply to his prayer comes the gracious answer, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” As he journeys forward a consciousness of Divine power will be over him, and beneath him he will feel the support and rest of the everlasting arms.

Then comes his second prayer. If God's presence is to be granted to Moses may it not also be granted to His people? Israel has but too sadly shown how that presence is needed. If Divine power is not closely manifested how can the nation be kept pure and in communion with God; if it is not pure what light will it give forth to surrounding nations?

This also was granted, for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

Lastly comes the third prayer. When Moses was in the wilderness God had revealed Himself to him by two means. He had showed him His presence in the fire around the bush, and He had proclaimed to him His name as the great I AM. Moses prays that a further revelation may be given to him, and that he may see the glory of God. We cannot understand fully either what he asked for or what was given to him because of the limitations of human speech and human thoughts. From the answer Moses seems to have prayed that he might see God both physically and spiritually. He seems to have asked that a vision far beyond that which had been given to Nadab and Abihu might be granted to him.

What answer will be given to him? Is this a pressing forward of his spirit beyond the limitations permitted to man, and if so can Moses make such a request and live any more than an Israelite who trespassed beyond the bounds set around the mountain and touched it might live? The answer reveals the thorough understanding and marvellous love which prevails between God and His servants. The goodness of God will pass before his spirit and a name more wonderful and more personal than that given at Horeb will be proclaimed before him. Moses had then realized the active presence of God, he will now be permitted to realize, not only the presence, but also the active mercy and goodness of God. But whatever flashes of glory and revelation might be granted to the spirit and to the intelligence of Moses, he is told that little could be granted to his physical senses. A vision will be given to him upon the mountain top, and as the vision passes he will be kept safe in the hollow of God's hand. The figure used is that he would gather some idea of the glory of God from afar off, just as we gather some idea of the form of one who has passed by and can tell from his general outline somewhat of his bearing and character although he is passing from our sight, but to no man could it be granted to see God as He is—he may not pass the limitations of his flesh.

The Second Ascent into the Mount.

God then bade Moses come up into the mountain with the two tables of stone which he had prepared for the writing of the law. He will there make to him the marvellous revelation which He had promised, but meantime the whole camp which surrounds the mountain must remain awe-struck and in silence; even the flocks and herds are to be kept away from the neighbourhood of the mountain. What passed in that vision is not revealed to us. Some faint idea of the vision of Nadab and Abihu had been recorded, but this vision is beyond human language; nothing can be revealed except the name of God, a name consisting of the attributes of God, and given to us as it was proclaimed to Moses—a name which we have heard from childhood, and

heard so often that we have become accustomed to it and do not realize its meaning, its wonder and its force.

The Revelation of the Character of God.

Maclaren justly says that if we are to gain any idea of the meaning of the name of God it will come to us only as we see it revealed in the person of Christ.

"We have Christ's life, God manifest"; not words about God, but the manifestation of the very Divine nature itself in action. "Merciful," and we see Jesus going about "doing good." "Gracious," and we see Him welcoming to Himself all the weary, and ever bestowing of the treasure of His love. "Longsuffering"; "Father! forgive them!" God is "plenteous in mercy and in truth," "forgiving transgression and sin"; "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "A God who will forgive our deviations from His law, our rebellion and our failure, but who warns us that such is the nature of sin that it continues, passes on from generation to generation." Whilst this marvellous revelation is being made, whilst the glory and mercy is being revealed, Moses, in haste lest the opportunity may pass away for ever, entreats that the iniquity of the nation may be pardoned, and the presence of God Himself go with them into Canaan. His prayer is granted, and granted beyond his desire. The sin pardoned and put away, God's mercy will return in covenant with His people; His hand will be terrible in the majesty with which He will drive out the nations who have defiled themselves by idolatry, and His power will be present as it has been nowhere else upon earth. But together with the covenant and promise come words of warning. There must be no intercourse whatsoever with idolaters or with idols. God speaks of Himself as a jealous God. It is impossible for the brightness of His face to shine upon them if the shadow of idolatry comes in between Him and them; hence, His name is jealous, for He is jealous because He wills that all their enemies should perish, and that those who love Him should rejoice in the light of His countenance, should be "as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges v. 31). In order to keep the nation near Him, and to bring them into

that light, they are reminded that three times in the year every man throughout the nation is to appear before God, and lest they should be afraid to leave their homes and fields, during these seasons, He tells them that the shield of His protection will be cast over the country, and that no enemy shall desire their land during that period when they go up to appear before Him.

LESSON XXXII.

EXODUS, XXXIV. 29 TO END.

ISRAEL CONSECRATED AND SEPARATED TO
SERVICE.

The Return of Moses from the Mountain.

For forty days and forty nights Moses remained in the mountain in prayer and communion with God. During this period he neither ate bread nor drank water, but was upheld by the hand of God. At last he was told to commit what he had heard to writing, so that it might stand as a new covenant between God and Israel, and he returned with the two tables of testimony in his hand, and once again descended to the people waiting below. What a difference there was between this second return of Moses from the mountain and the first. The first time, whilst still upon the mountain, shouts of wild licence and of idol worship had come into the very presence of God Himself. This time he descended whilst Israel awaited his coming in silence, and looked in awestruck wonder at the radiance of the glory of God which shone upon his face. It is difficult to understand exactly what is meant by this expression. It seems as though the spirit of Moses had been so filled with the Divine Spirit that the glory of that Spirit pierced, as it were, through the veil of his flesh, just as on the Mount of Transfiguration Christ was transfigured before him, and His face "did shine as the sun." The face of Moses being thus glorified seems like a foretaste of the resurrection body, and reminds us of the promise which was made to the Church

of Pergamos, that if that Church were faithful unto death it should receive a glistening white stone, and in the stone a new name written. Moses had just received the revelation of the new name of God, and his face was shining with heavenly glory, reminding us of God's saints in Pergamos, who were promised a new name or revelation of the nature of God and of Christ, such revelation creating a new personality within them, and changing them from glory to glory. The new name which had been given to Moses seems to have revealed God to him in such abundant measure that his face shone with a glory so brilliant that Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come near him, and it was necessary for him to put a veil over his face whenever they came into his presence. This is referred to in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians iii. 13: "And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished."

The veil which Moses put over his face was typical of the veil which still remains over the children of Israel, the glory which had been revealed to Moses in the mount could not be revealed to them because of the blindness and hardness of their heart. The fuller revelation of that glory which came at the incarnation of Christ cannot even to this day be revealed to them. 2 Corinthians iii. 15: "Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart."

The Carrying out of the Instructions given in the Mount.

Moses then gathered all the children of Israel together and gave them instructions for the building of the tabernacle, and invited them to bring offerings for the services of God. What a contrast between his meeting with them this second time and the stern judgment with which he had met them the first time that he descended from the mount. What a contrast between the earrings which the people tore out of their ears and gave to Aaron and the offering which Moses now called for from the nation.

With full and glad hearts both men and women brought in abundance gold bracelets, tablets, jewels, cloth of various kinds, together with the offer of the willing service of their hands. They offered their work in the constructing of the fabrics of the temple and weaving of the coverings and veil. There is something very touching, but also very joyful, in this first gathering, which was made by God's people as a nation for His work. It partakes not of the nature of him who gives a grudgingly measured tenth, but of Him who gave Himself for us. This old list of offering stands first in a long train of willing service; as we read it we seem to look down the ages and to see God's saints either alone or in bands giving with glad hearts what God will receive from them. We see not only the Israelites in the wilderness, but David gathering together the material for the temple; Ezra carrying the free-will offering of the people to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem; the early Christians selling lands and houses and laying the price at the apostles' feet; the great succession "from earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast," of all those who have not counted their own lives dear unto themselves, who have given either of their poverty, as the widow with her two mites, or of their abundance, to the service of God.

Before taking up this first offering Moses gave certain directions to the children of Israel, and these directions strike the keynote of all true giving. In the first place the gifts which the Israelites brought for the service of the tabernacle are distinctly proclaimed by God to be gifts given to Himself. Ex. xxxv. 4-5: "This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded . . . an offering of the Lord." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (St. Matthew xxv. 40). "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord" (Proverbs xix. 17).

In the second place, Moses might receive gifts only from those who brought them with a willing heart. They were to be given in the same spirit as that of the magi when they brought their gold and frankincense and myrrh to the infant Jesus: our gifts if willing ones will be accepted. They

are given for the King's work, but they really pass into the hands of the King Himself. He understands both our capability and also the spirit in which we give them. He knows that we are governed not by the law of how little but how much, not what we ought to give, but what we may. Therefore, whosoever is of a "willing heart," "whosoever is wise-hearted," whosoever has "learned the joy of the Lord," is indued with the fire of His love, may come forward and offer with full heart and hand.

As we read about the joy with which the Israelites came forward we cannot help feeling that a consciousness of sin forgiven must have been present with them, and have helped to awaken such open-hearted liberality, for we read that Moses had to restrain the people from bringing. It is the same with us to-day—according to the intensity with which we realize the pardoning love of Christ, and rejoice in the way opened for us to return to God, our hearts will overflow with joy and gratitude, and the gift of our hand will accompany our hearts. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (St. Luke vii. 47).

Thus with joy and gladness every detail of the pattern given in the mount was carried out, and the building of the tabernacle erected, until at last the ark itself was completed and brought with reverence into the inner court of the tabernacle. The shew bread was placed on the table, the lamps were lighted, and a cloud of incense ascended into the Holy of Holies, and the work of the tabernacle was finished.

The Resting of the Glory of God upon the Tabernacle.

With what breathless expectation and awe both Moses and the congregation must have surrounded the tabernacle, now once again, by the permission of God, erected within the camp, and have watched in anxious expectation for the promised presence of God to rest upon it. In full measure that promise was fulfilled, for we read that the glory of God filled the tabernacle with such majesty that Moses

could not enter into the tent, and that from that time forward the cloud constantly visibly rested upon it. If the tabernacle was removed whilst the children of Israel journeyed forward, the cloud removed also; if the tabernacle rested, the cloud rested also upon it.

This is what St. Paul meant when he prayed that the individual Christian might be filled with all the fulness of God; he asked that the Spirit of God in full measure might rest both visibly and constantly upon His servants, filling them with joy and peace, just as the glory of God had rested in the days of old upon the tabernacle. Wherever the fulness rests, there the light of the Christian shines forth, men see their good works and glorify their Father which is in Heaven.

Conclusion.

As Moses with glad heart viewed the completion of the tabernacle and the consummation of the promise of God, a deep feeling of thankfulness must have overpowered him as he saw what God had wrought at his hand. But a few months before, Israel had been a nation of slaves, apparently without hope and without God in the world, with little thought beyond the misery of the hour, the impossibility of the task required of them, and the whips of their taskmasters; they had been a people so sunk in misery that he had thought it impossible to arouse them, impossible to awaken them even by the direct call of God to a desire, or to an effort to escape from the bondage under which they groaned. And now they were a free nation. They had been redeemed from a double bondage—the bondage of Pharaoh and the bondage of sin, and they had been brought out of darkness into light and love. They had been taught something of the power and majesty of God, the holiness of His nature, of His redeeming and transforming power, of His grace, which would enable them to pass from the power of sin into the liberty of the children of God. Israel had learned other lessons also as necessary for them as those first great lessons about the glory of God. They had seen

something of the sinfulness of their own hearts; they had tasted something of the wonder of the forgiveness of God, that forgiveness which, once known, could never be forgotten. They had been given an acknowledged meeting-place in which God would draw near to them and in which they might satisfy their souls with the knowledge of God, and cast off for ever the idol worship of Egypt by which they had been surrounded. They had been brought into the presence of God, they had entered into communion and covenant with Him, they had been permitted to worship Him, and His glory had visibly rested and was resting upon them. Above all, God had been vindicated as the King of all the earth. He who, but a few months before, had been shrouded in darkness, not only from Israel, but also from the whole world, had been revealed, and a foretaste given of that time when He should be enthroned above the Heavens, when all people, nations, and languages should fall down and worship Him.

As Moses stood before the tent of the congregation into which he could not enter because of the fulness of the cloud which rested upon it, for the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, a feeling of triumph must once again have taken full possession of him and of the Israelites who surrounded him, and they must have cried, with even more understanding and more exultation than once before by the Red Sea, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people, which Thou hast redeemed, Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation."

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